Mrs Nicholls

SHOOTING IN HONG KONG

by T. M. Gullick

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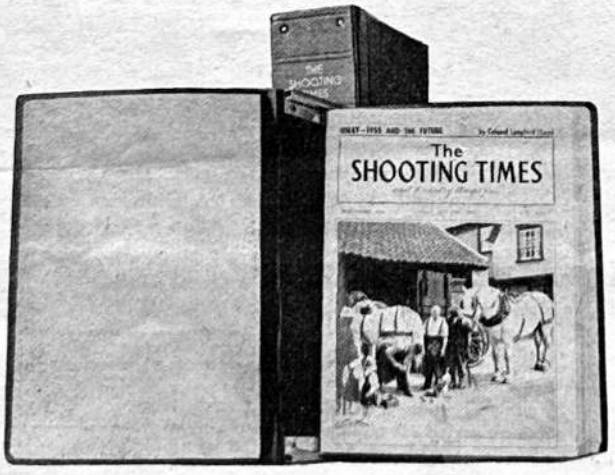

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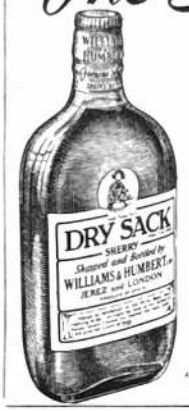

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R. I. B.

THE Rural Industries Bureau is entrusted by the Government to provide technical advice and assistance to country workshops. This is achieved by individual instruction, by courses at Farm Institutes and other centres and by experimental work carried out at the Bureau's headquarters, the Bureau is concerned with improving and bringing up to date the techniques and business methods employed in rural industries and in equipping them to face modern, competitive conditions.

In his foreword to the annual report, Sir Basil Mayhew stresses the importance of the contribution of these small firms to the welfare of the rural districts in which they are located. The social well-being of country folk is inevitably linked with the opportunity to choose their mode of employment. These small industries provide that opportunity, but at the same time they are contributing in no small measure to the national economy. In fact, many large industries are partly dependent on the productivity of the small ones.

Most European countries have national organisations for assisting small and medium-sized enterprises. In the United States there is a Government agency entirely devoted to this purpose. In this country there is no such organisation, so the value of the R.I.B. cannot be overestimated. Those who attended the Holland Park exhibition staged by the Bureau, welcomed the opportunity of seeing some of the country industries and examples of the countryman's skills and craftsmanships, embracing engineering, woodworking, saddlery, thatching, wrought ironwork, basketry and other crafts which owe their continued existence and prosperity to this organisation.

Throughout the past year the staff of the Bureau have been hard pressed to keep pace with the demand for their services. The development of country industries has meant that the character of the technical assistance and instruction has had to become increasingly complex and advanced. Mechanisation on the farms has its repercussions on those industries which serve the farmer. The agricultural engineer today must acquire some knowledge of hydraulics, the diesel engine, electricity and metallurgy as well as a thorough knowledge of machines and apparatus such as the combine harvester, the baler, the tractor, and milking machinery.

Equally advanced technical problems arise from the variety of producer industries revealed by the Bureau's recent survey. These small manufacturing concerns often have production problems which stem from inexperienced management. It is thus likely that in the future the Bureau will be faced with providing advice in the field of work study and business management.

The Government has urged industry to increase production by greater efficiency, using available resources rather than incurring large capital expenditure. Much can be done to achieve this by encouraging rural industries to study their production methods; to eliminate wasted effort and to ensure an even flow throughout—starting with management, then production, and finally distribution to the ultimate market.

THE SHOOTING TIMES AND COUNTRY MAGAZINE

Incorporating FIELD SPORTS

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No. 3960 FRIDAY, AUGUST 1, 1958 Founded 1882

The wild life of today is not ours to dispose of as we please. We have it in trust, We must account for it to those who come after.—King George VI.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Game Fair Success

The Game Fair must now be firmly established as an annual event for many years to come. That was the opinion of all the organisers and visitors to whom I spoke at Stetchworth last Friday and Saturday during the most successful sporting show of this or any other season.

Early doubts about the weather or attendance were dispelled even before Friday's official time of opening. In bright sunshine a thousand visitors had entered the lovely setting of Hall Farm by 10 a.m., a number which was to be more than quadrupled before the first day was out. This gratifying though unexpected influx proved at first something of an embarrassment to the caterers, but far from being overwhelmed, they reorganised overnight in time to cope with similar proportions on the Saturday. Full marks to them too, for unflagging good humour, speedy service, and generous victuals at fair prices.

In spite of the crowds, at no time did one have the feeling, common to most shows, of oppressive overcrowding This was due, first, to the layout of the stands and demonstrations, and secondly, because there was so much to see that even those present on both days had to keep moving if they were thoroughly to cover all the ground. And yet at no time was any great distance involved, so well sited was each exhibit around the central buildings. There, under cover, were the trade stands and those of the sporting societies and associations, besides displays by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Forestry Commission.

To prefer one to another would be invidious. Almost without exception all were excellently arranged, and reflected much thoughtful effort by their tenants to add something different to the Fair, thus guaranteeing a complete coverage of shooting and conservation.

Outside, the field events were equally varied, instructive and entertaining, besides being so well timed that each could be enjoyed in turn.

Merlins and a peregrine flew to the lure where earlier decorative archers in traditional Lincoln green had given an exhibition of strength and fluent accuracy that made more than one expert rifle shot raise his hat; muzzle-vied with breech-loader at high "pheasants" — and won; labradors and spaniels showed their paces—and more intelligence than allowed by the rules—in working tests; the modern simplicity of game rearing was ably explained, with all the props; for a shilling one could try to burst balloons, hit moving targets not much larger than clay pipes—three down won a medal —or attack the more leisurely five bull card with a .22 match rifle. How eighteen holes appeared in the card at which I fired but ten shots, I am still wondering.

The smooth running of the show may be judged largely from the welcome lack of all but the most necessary loudspeaker announcements. To the music of the band of the Cambridgeshire Regiment keepers and landowners, tenants, farmers, rough shooters, fowlers, dog trainers, clay busters, and countrymen from all points of the compass walked and talked and watched and learned and competed in friendly rivalry—but no one criticised.

My most lasting impression of Stetchworth is the spirit in which the Game Fair was conducted, and the informality of the occasion. There was highly efficient organisation without any apparent effort; officious officialdom was absent, cut-throat competition was present in no quarter; careless, carefree, friendly, a guarantee of the thriving interest being shown in shooting, the Fair is here to stay.

I understand that a site for another Game Fair next year has already been offered, and hope that similar fairs will be held annually in different parts of the country so that everyone may have a chance of seeing the first-class show presented last weekend.

Highway Hazards

On a recent short tour of downland byways, I came across the remains of more than a dozen hares which had obviously been run over. Considering the remoteness of the area, this proportion, within five miles or so, struck me as a high one. It is a safe bet that most of the victims met their death after lighting-up time, for a hare caught in the headlights is notoriously vulnerable.

Cars are not the only road hazards that game has to face. We are all familiar with the danger of tar melting in the sun, to which partridges are apt to stick when they go gritting on the roads. A Scottish friend tells me that he almost caught a kestrel the other day due to melting tar. The hawk was scavenging a car-killed sparrow which was stuck to the road, and was unable to take off in a hurry as one of its talons was entangled in the corpse. Just as my friend was about to put his cap over the bird, it made a supreme effort and dragged the sparrow clear of the tar, flying off with the body still snagged.

Clogging tar on birds' feet, even if it does not hold them fast to the road, must render many a toe and talon useless.

AUCEPS.

A semi-tame corner of the marshlands in dry weather.

MARSHLAND JOTTINGS

by Tower-Bird

ABOUT 8 o'clock last night, and after dibbing-in and trickling water on my three-hundred-and-fiftieth leek, I stood outside the back-door of my cottage, stripped to the waist, having a part scrub-down. I may add that I was invisible to any member of the great British public, for a small concrete square behind my cottage is well-sheltered and private. From it I can look out over a scene of marshland stretching away to the distant downs and see no other human habitation in front of me.

At this hour of eventide the sinking sun has passed out of sight of my back-door, but continues to light up the marshes (or " brooks," as the Sussex folk call them), until it finally vanishes over the rim of the high downs in the west. Thus, as I stood this evening, arms akimbo over a manly chest, the impression or sensation I received was that of standing in a shaded gallery regarding a vast landscape picture lit by artificial lighting. Beyond the slope where my allotment blooms and blushes with runner beans, and beyond the further and steeper slope, stretched a fifty-acre marsh-meadow, a scene of sun-scorched industry where, only three weeks ago, it lay under flood-water.

Surely it is a miracle (perhaps unnoticed by most people) how such a heavy, coarse crop as these wide acres yield can lie submerged and sodden, beaten down by gale and fast water, yet completely recover in so short a spell, so that the cutter can do its job. The grass, I knew, was being cut and carted under contract for a new owner, and, watching the scene this evening, I marvelled at the speed of modern agricultural methods. From where I was standing the men looked little larger than ants, and, like ants, they worked with an industry which almost made me tired to watch. A tractor almost flew found a diminishing oblong of cut and rapidly-drying grass, the spinning wire wheels of the instrument in tow scuffling up the hay and leaving it in rows through which the light evening breeze blew air heated by the sun. Round another great patch, which had been similarly treated earlier and which was now dry hay, roared a second tractor pulling a baler. At more than fast walking speed this triumph of engineering grunted its way, ejecting tide bales which it would tax the average boy to lift. In another part of the field two lorries were being loaded up with bales, for a lengthy journey by road.

Late Evening Walk Round

Half-an-hour later, I was walking round the edge of the field with a gun. The men were still working, but now out in the centre. As I came to a solitary tall willow two pigeon flew lazily out on the far side, with no seeming hurry at all. They were out of shot when the branches no longer hid them, and both soared indolently upwards with a few wing-claps, then glided, and soared again, finally making off in slow and low flight towards some distant elms. Another half-dozen flew from some willows further on, but long before I came within shooting range.

Don suddenly pointed a spot in a hidden drain, lifting a paw like a pointer proper, and remaining stiff. I let him pounce to order, for I knew that if any young game birds, or duck, were there, I could call him off. As I gave my permission, he went through the creamy waves of meadow-sweet, the pale red willow-herb, the yellow of " stinking Willie," the thistles and the nettles like a black torpedo. Came a splashing; then the cover parted and he came stepping into the open with a half-grown moorhen. I took the bird away from him and cast it gently over the top of the dense cover on to the water. There was a light splash. It was evident then that it made for the muddy sides of the drain under the overhang of the bank, for I heard it sploshing away like a tipsy little wildfowler wearing mud-pattens.

Evening Flight

We travelled quite a distance before it began to grow dusk, flushing one strong brood of pheasants by the river bank. I did not see the the hen, she squatting on her own or taking charge of members of the family which preferred not to fly, but nine well-grown young pheasants crossed the water and flew a considerable distance over standing grass on the far bank before coming to earth. I had a mind to flush the hen, but thought better of it.

I had timed our walk well, for hardly had we arived at a spot where I intended watching for some form of evening flight, when seven mallard, and a bit later a team of over twenty flew almost over our heads, along the old, old flight line. Already, I think, the birds had found some laid barley on the hills. Incidentally, a farmer 'phoned me up laster last night to say that pigeon were coming on to a barley field several patches of which are laid. Could I come to the rescue? Probably the pigeon would vanish after a shot or two, but not so the jackdaws which nothing seemed to frighten away and which were doing the real damage.

There is one bit of rough shooting I have high up on a hill where the flies really are beyond endurance, but on the marshes their attentions are not too serious, and the real agony comes from what I take to be harvesters which bite legs and ankles, particularly the latter, and some mighty midge which gets under the wrist-watch strap. I have tried a number of reasonably-priced fly-repellants, and, though some are not too bad under normal circumstances, none so far has protected me in the worst fly places. Last night, however, before our walk across the marshes, I rubbed my legs and wrists with some completely scentless stuff called " Flypel," a product of I.C.I., and which a friend on that firm sent me. Joking apart, he had read a former article of mine in which I had complained about fly-and-midge-trouble and asked me to try this preparation which he himself uses when fishing. So far I have given it only this one trial, rubbing it also about the head and ears of the dog. For once I came back in one piece, and Don was not worried by the attention of buzzing flies. If I still find it good after a week's trial, I will give I.C.I. another free advert! On the principle of a sprat to catch a mackerel, of course. In fact, I have a good mind to take the shots out of two cartrdiges, re-load with Flypel, and fire them at my next pigeon hide from a distance of five yards.

Harvesters and Sprites

I think most of us — ignorant countrymen that we are — would like to know a little more about harvesters, and how they work. Do they burrow into the skin and run about under it like a lot of No. 9 shot? What form do they take? Why do they seem to survive the most shocking banging and scratching of their victims: are they armour-plated? Maybe Dr. Jeff Harrison, or some other reader who goes in for scientific research along these lines, could enlighten us. I used to go through untold agony with them on the raring field on the Berkshire downs years ago.

Now that much of the grass is cut on the marshes one sees more of those lovely little sprites, the grey wagtails, so thin and streamlined that, when they run along and take off from a whisp of hay, they look like a few bits of grass themselves lifted by a wind. With shrill calls of protest, they hang in the air for a moment and next minute are alternately standing and running on the hay at the edge of a forest of scarlet-seeded docks bordering a dyke. The delicate little pipit is quite a clumsy bird by comparison.

There are large acreages of marshland where one rarely sees a partridge. On other marshes one flushes a covey as it dusts in a gateway, or beside a cattle-track. On still others where the cover is not too dense and where the arable land is not far away, one can come across quite a number of birds sheltering in the noon-day heat, or skimming, or running to jugg there at nightfall. But our marshes are not really attractive to the coveys, though they make grand holding cover on shooting days, when the birds have been driven from downland, or ordinary upland arables. Pheasants are a different proposition; they are birds of marsh and reedland, and we take our toll.

As for " hawks," they are usually conspicuous by their absence. One sees the odd kestrel sailing high over the marsh, or hovering nearer the ground. But rarely does one see the distant small, purposeful black arc of a peregrine, and nearly as rare is the sight of a flashing sparrow-hawk. And yet the remains of pigeon and plover are a common sight. When a peregrine is using the area, or visiting it at regular intervals, such remains become quite alarmingly common.

Again, very rarely, do I get a glimpse of a hobby, and then usually " inland of the marsh," among the oaks of steep bracken banks. During my seven years or so in Sussex I have not, so far as I know, seen a merlin, though it is not always easy to tell the difference, under some circumstances, between this smallest of our falcons and a cock sparrow-hawk. I suppose some pundit will contradict me; nevertheless there are occasions when one looks like t'other.

A Greylag at Midnight

by W. C.

FEW shooting feats, surely, can give more satisfaction than the killing of a goose by moonlight from sea-wall or salting. I have never done that, but last winter I shot one by moonlight from the shore of a loch, which is, I suppose, the next best thing. I was exceedingly lucky to put it in the bag. This is how it happened.

I was in Scotland doing my annual round of rough shooting, and one day at dawn I went far out on the sands of the firth to flight the wigeon with the kind and hospitable expert B. of whom I have written before. The wigeon were not very co-operative that morning, but we shot four.

After the flight had ended I asked B. about geese. "Well," he said, "as you know, it's not much use flighting geese in the morning and evening while there's a moon, but we could try by moonlight if you like. It's a chancy business but we might be lucky.

I said that I was "on" and two nights later at 10.30 I met him and one of his friends. There was a stiff but warm breeze blowing, plenty of cloud, and the moon was three days past the full.

We went to a loch used by the geese as a resting place, the idea being to intercept them as they left it for one of their feeding grounds. B. was not optimistic. The geese, he said, had been very much disturbed, though not much damaged, only two nights before by three gunners to whom the landowner had given permission for one night, and who had, according to an earwitness, fired fifty-one cartridges for only one goose! So innocuous a barrage must surely be a record of some kind.

Already on the Move

As we approached the loch-side we heard much goose noise (greylags, by the sound of it) on or near the far shore. The geese were already on the move, and, as far as we could tell from the noise, they were departing in the wrong direction. We waited a little longer while B. pondered our best plan of action: then two shots sounded from across the water.

At the shots there was a terriffic clamour. We hurried down to the shore to take up positions, in case any geese that had been disturbed came over to our side. On the way we met another fowler friend of B.'s (it was he who had heard the fifty-one shots) crouched in a ditch with what looked in the half-light to be a black labrador close beside him.

"Is yours a dog or a bitch?" he asked me, for I had my yellow Annie with me. "Bitch," I replied. "Oh, that's all right then," he said. "I was afraid it might be a dog. Mine's a bit of a fighter."

We went a little further on and settled ourselves into some bracken by the water's edge, about fifty yards apart. There were geese on the move but they were all flying up the loch some distance from the shore and landing well out in the water. Though the moon was cloud-dimmed I could just see them with the binoculars.

An hour or so passed. We listened hopefully but it seemed that the geese had decided to remain on the water for the time being. Patience was needed. I reclined on my side, after the manner of a Roman at a dinner party, partly for concealment but mainly for comfort.

At last I heard geese calling, to my right. The noise was nearing but I did not move, having decided that it was only another lot flying up the loch to join the others on the water. Why I should have adopted a mental attitude as casual as my physical one I cannot imagine. All I do know is that within a matter of seconds my heart gave a violent thump as a small skein suddenly appeared, flying close inshore—nearly over my head, in fact.

Frantically, I twisted myself into a position from which I could shoot. Bang! Bang!—and then that sick feeling of despair as they all thrashed their wings to gain height and went on. If only I had been ready it would have been, by goose standards, an easy chance.

The skein faded away in the moonlight, but just before they vanished I saw one turn away and swing out towards the loch, losing height, but not rapidly. I whipped the binoculars up and could just follow its course for a while; then I lost it against the dark background of the firs on the opposite shore. I wondered whether it really was hit or whether it had taken it into its head to leave the skein and join the others on the water. These were too far off to have been disturbed by my shots.

While I was thus wondering, what I can best

The scene of the retrieve in daylight.

describe as a black canine bullet came hurtling past me from my right—the other fowler's dog. He shot far away down the shore to the left, in the direction taken by the skein, and then he splashed out into the water. The loch is a very shallow one; he was able to splash a long way before going out of his depth.

Out he went, putting up a lot of geese which beat a very noisy retreat. "Surely he can't have marked that bird, even if it *was* wounded," I thought. "He must have got excited at the shots and he's just run amok among the geese resting on the water."

Some minutes of silence and then more splashes, faintly heard. He was returning. I got him in the binoculars as he emerged from the shadows. He seemed, incredibly, to have something in his mouth. "I believe he's got that goose," I cried.

An Amazing Retrieve

I was right. He came galloping back with the bird—a six-and-a-half pound greylag—and gave it to his owner, who handed it me.

"What an amazing retrieve," I said. "I'll put the goose in my game *book* but do, please, put it in your game *bag* for I should never have got it without your dog." But he refused.

I would not like to say how far away that goose came down. Distances in the moonlight are deceptive, but B., who knows the place intimately, said at least a quarter of a mile. Of what I *am* certain is that, wild and pugnacious though the black labrador may be (if indeed he *is* a labrador, for in the dim light I could not be sure, and in the excitement I forgot to ask) he performed that night the best feat of marking that I have yet seen. If the goose had suddenly fallen from a considerable height it would not have been so remarkable, but, as I have written, it planed down very gradually. Moreover, the dog was some way to my right and the skein went away to my left.

My own Annie is by no means myopic. Indeed, only the day before, when a wounded partridge went away low in very bad light and then half towered and collapsed some two hundred and fifty yards away, she marked it exactly; but I believe she knew no more of the fate of that goose than I did.

After this astonishing display of long-range marking at midnight the dog and his master retired but we three stayed out until 4.30 a.m. It was always exciting. Geese were continually on the move, but the only skein—a very small one—that came within shot I left for B., thinking they would give him a better chance, and he happened to be looking the wrong way and did not see them. The moral of this? Covert-side courtesy is out of place when after geese.

SALMON LEFT-OVERS

by PAMELA KAY

I THOROUGHLY agree with your correspondent that the simplest recipes are the best for the delicate flavour of Scotch or English salmon. The following are excellent methods of using up left-over pieces.

Coquilles of salmon: Cold salmon, grated cheese, scallop shells, a little butter, sauce Bechamel. Remove all the bones from the cold salmon, and mix it with some sauce Bechamel. Fill the required number of shells with the mixture, then sprinkle with grated cheese. Pour a little melted butter over the top and brown under the grill.

Sauce Bechamel: 1oz. butter, 1oz. flour, 1 pint milk, salt, pepper, nutmeg, thyme. One tablespoon chopped onion. Melted butter.

Toss the onions in a little melted butter. Boil the milk and add it to the onion with the seasoning and thyme. Cook extremely slowly in a covered saucepan for an hour. Then heat the 1oz. of butter and add the flour, stirring continuously. Do not allow to brown. Bring the milk to the boil, and strain it slowly into the flour and butter mixture, stirring all the time to prevent lumps.

Another excellent recipe for left-overs is salmon cutlets. Make a paste of cold salmon and some cooked mushrooms. Add some thickened bechamel sauce and yolk of egg to bind. Spread the mixture on a cold surface and when cool, cut into slices and shape them like cutlets. Coat them with egg and bread crumbs and fry just before serving. Garnish with fried parsley.

A fair duck hatch is in sight in western Canada's prairie provinces . . . Current indications are: Alberta—good production despite some drought loss in south. Saskatchewan—production below last year's; suffering severely from drought. Manitoba—final production may be equal to last year's or slightly less; nesting success erratic.

The foregoing birdseye view of the wildfowl nesting situation in western Canada is offered by the July issue of the Ducks Unlimited *Ducko-logical*, prepared by their chief naturalist, Bert W. Cartwright. The report stresses the fact that first nestings have been "fairly successful in Alberta, variable in Saskatchewan and fair-to-middling in Manitoba." It also reveals that success or failure of renesters and late nesters is "still in doubt as large areas, particularly in Saskatchewan, are fast drying up."

Northern Alberta areas report water levels "almost back to normal after early floods" and an increased duck population. Central areas have fairly good water levels and population. Southern Alberta reports smaller water bodies "practically all dry" and ducks concentrated on the remaining water, including D. U. projects.

Drought conditions are affecting duck production in Saskatchewan with the east-central quadrant best for water conditions and the parkland section of this quadrant reporting a "considerable increase in waterfowl." Manitoba reports fairly good water conditions and population, but erratic nesting success.

Shooting in Hong Kong

by T. M. Gullick

AT the present time with the garrison of Hong Kong and the New Territories it is probable that many a Serviceman will be stationed there for a year or so. It is to help any of them who are keen on shooting that these few notes on game bird shooting, or "hunting" as it is known in Hong Kong, are written.

When I first heard of my appointment to Hong Kong, I at once started to make enquiries about the shooting. Little did I learn. The average reply was, "None at all," or "A few snipe but pretty poor." With optimism undamped I packed my guns when I left England.

Even on my arrival at Hong Kong I found few people who knew about the shooting, and it was several months before I met a Portuguese who introduced me to the whole field of sport.

The shooting rights of Hong Kong and the New Territories are all held by the Hong Kong Government and anyone holding an arms and game licence can shoot anywhere in the Colony, except for the few protected areas—the Island of Hong Kong is one of these. The best shooting areas are in the New Territories around Fanling, along the border and among the paddies, swamps and mangrove of Deep Bay. To aid the visiting sportsman a romanised version of the Cantonese for each bird is bracketed after its name.

The chief game bird of Hong Kong is the snipe (*Sarchoy*). These are most numerous during the autumn and early winter months. There are four species of snipe — the pintail, fantail, swinhoe's or great and the jack snipe; only the first two are seen in any numbers. The pintail is the passage bird and is more the paddy bird of the two, preferring paddy fields, potato patches and water-chestnut beds to the swamps and mangrove favoured by the fantail or winter snipe. This latter can be distinguished by its smaller size, whiter underparts and fewer tail feathers, none of them "pin." Water-chestnut patches in October and November are very good ground for snipe and make easy shooting, although care must be taken to keep to the paddy paths or "bunds" as the crop is easily crushed by walking. Your beater will retrieve the birds as his bare feet do not seem to have the same damaging effect.

The "spring" snipe come with a rush in the period of heavy rain and thundery showers during late March, April, or early May. Thus they may not give any shooting as the new close season starts on May 1. Spring snipe are never in for long and are not in the same numbers as the autumn birds.

Not a True Snipe

Another bird known as the painted snipe is a winter visitor. This is not a true snipe, as it is not a member of the *Scolopidae*. They are a larger bird, slow off the mark, and thus easy to hit, but they make the most excellent eating.

Snipe shooting seems to become a knack, and with plenty of practice one should become quite accurate. The weather conditions, as always, play an important part. An average of one in two is fairly simple on a hot afternoon when the birds seem lazy and sluggish; but on a wild, windy day the birds will jump well out and one in three or four is the best most can do.

Dogs are not needed. In fact they can prove a menace, what with village dogs and domesticated water buffalo round the paddies. A local beater is almost indispensible. He will know the best ground and liaise with the villagers for you and he has a remarkable aptitude for marking your birds, however many you may have down, and some can even "call" a snipe down to you.

No. 8 shot is the standard snipe cartridge. A variety of guns will be seen in the field as many of the local sportsmen use American pump or fully automatic guns, but the ordinary British double twelve will bag as many if not more than any of these in the right hands.

A day's bag of ten or fifteen couple per gun is reasonable; twenty or more is good, while bags of up to one hundred are recorded.

Duck (*Soyup*) are sometimes seen when out snipe shooting. Flocks of teal and garganey may be flushed from a deeply flooded paddy or from a stream, but rarely in any number, and they cannot be relied on. Autumn will bring in the few teal and garganey, and later a few mallard, black duck, gadwall, pintail, wigeon or shoveler, with the occasional rarer variety found in the mangrove and swamps. Regular flighting cannot be relied on, although some of the more knowledgeable local duck hunters do well over a season, particularly if the weather up the coast further north is hard, or if the typhoons drive the duck in for shelter. But the average sportsman will be lucky if he bags twenty in a season. Some of the marsh villagers put up wide mesh flighting nets over the paddy fields on which the duck may feed, but these may well be left up for weeks before a duck or whole flock is netted, and often there must be no catch.

Outside Disturbance

Occasionally some form of disturbance across the border may suddenly drive large flocks of duck into the British side of Deep Bay. They can then be seen wheeling in many hundreds over the mangroves, and if one is lucky enough to be about a good bag can be made.

There is a great variety of other wildfowl and waders in the swamps of Deep Bay. Of these the best shooting are the curlew, whimbrel and plover (golden and grey). Most smaller types of sandpiper, stint and plover can be seen, but are best left in peace. Wild geese have very occasionally been seen here.

The partridge (*Cheekoo*), next to the snipe, is probably the most popular Hong Kong sporting bird, and with many must be more popular due to the dog work required to secure it. Strictly speaking it is not a true partridge but a francolin, a bird about the size of a red grouse and of solitary habit. Rarely are more than two seen together and single birds are the rule.

A good dog, or dogs, is essential to bag any partridges at all and even then a day's bag of four birds is very reasonable. This is not so much due to the shortage of birds, but more to the spread of each bird's territory and its adeptness at running and eluding even the best of dogs. Many a time the dogs appear to be on a "hot" scent and work madly round for several minutes, all to no avail—either the bird has evaded them or previously it has flown on. One never knows, but the former, I suspect, is often the case.

Loud and long are the arguments over the best dogs for the Hong Kong partridges. The pointer would seem to be the best over the more open hills where it can range faster, cover more ground, and give the sportsman time to reach it and regain his breath before the bird is flushed. The spaniel (cockers are the only ones worked in Hong Kong), is better in cover and can often flush a bird from undergrowth a pointer could never penetrate. But, both breeds have their champions and there is a lot to be said on either side. One of the best partridge dogs I knew in Hong Kong was a bull terrier that hunted, pointed and retrieved. The occasional woodcock (*Sahchcynay* or *Sahchoyma*) will be flushed during partridge shooting, and they are as much prized as elsewhere. Quail (*Umsun*) are often quite numerous both on the hills and in the dry paddies and rice stubbles.

The other chief sporting bird is the pigeon (*Pangow*). There are three types, all of which are really doves and similar to our turtle dove. The smallest, the Burmese blue rock, is not often seen; the commonest is the resident Eastern turtle dove and is found in good numbers; the largest, the scale-back, is a dove almost the size of our stock dove, and is a winter visitor.

Pigeon shooting in Hong Kong is a highly organised tactical operation. Several beaters and guns are required to get a good bag. The guns are given their stands beforehand, and the beaters start to beat through the various woods and groves, letting off fire crackers as they go and shouting loudly all the time. The noise they make is considerable, and when a few villagers and children join in with the odd gong to bang, the din is indescribable.

The shooting is not usually difficult, except for the scale-back, which is a fast, high flying bird with the pigeon's mystic art of holding lead despite the flying feathers. A bag of over forty is quite usual for four or five guns over good, well driven ground.

There is a little "game" hunting to be had in the New Territories after wild pig and barking deer, but for these rifles, trained dogs and expert guides are needed and the subject is a treatise in itself.

The visiting sportsman to Hong Kong may not get very heavy bags, but if he is keen enough he will have plenty of sport and enjoyment, and he will come to know a type of Chinese quite different from the teeming millions of Hong Kong and Kowloon.

Manx Game Preservation

THE work of the Manx Game Preservation Society in the past few years is showing good results.

This was reported to the annual meeting of members in the Ramsey Church Institute on Monday by the hon. secretaries—Mr. J. Corteen and Mr. T. Wylde.

Reference was made to the systematic destruction of vermin and to the release of over 60 pheasants and breeding of hares.

Speaking generally the year has been comparatively quiet; but the work of the past is showing results. Over sixty pheasants were released during the year in suitable places, most of these birds were ringed, and if any person should find any ringed pheasant dead or maimed, details would be appreciated, also any information regarding jungle fowl. The imported brown hares have bred and quite a few are to be seen in some districts, and pheasants in the wild state have spread over the countryside to a fair extent.

Unfortunately both hares and pheasants are not being given a fair chance by everybody.

It has been illegal to shoot or take hares or pheasants for the past year, but in spite of this reports are to hand of both being shot and caught by other means; in quite a few cases details are known, but proof has not been forthcoming to prosecute offenders.

Vermin has been systematically destroyed during the year; 272 have definitely been killed and handed in, comprising 210 magpies; 48 grey backs and 14 hawks; quite a number more were killed but not picked up, eggs and nests of vermin have also been destroyed. It is noticeable in some districts that vermin are fewer in numbers due to repeated drives by members but generally speaking vermin are increasing yearly. It is also evident that woodpigeon are increasing to an alarming extent. Quite a number of these pests have been shot, but organised pigeon shoots in co-operation with farmers would be helpful in reducing the numbers of these destructive birds. In some cases damage to crops by pigeons has been erroneously attributed to hares. This Society gives four cartridges for a grey back; two each for magpies and hawks (heads only are required).

The village of Fetter-Cairn, Kincardineshire.

Round the Game Preserves

by David Imrie

THE other day a man informed me that an outcry against rabbits is blowing up among the householders on the northern outskirts of his market town. A little later this information was verified by a letter in a local paper. I gather that allotments and gardens have been pillaged, and that the time has now come for action. The inhabitants are calling for a shooting day among the pests. This *volte-face* amused me slightly. Only a year or two ago we read in innumerable papers that the younger children of today would grow up without ever having seen a bunny rabbit in its wild state!

It so happens that I know this alleged plague area quite well, and I was astonished to learn that rabbits were there in sufficient numbers to do serious harm; for no complaints have ever emanated from that quarter even in the good old days when the rodents swarmed almost everywhere. The fact is that practically no burrows exist so near the town, and any rabbits living there now must be hiding in crops, in hedge-bottoms, and in the rough cover available. Therefore, this talk of a shooting day is so much hot air. The pests simply cannot be contacted easily, and the afflicted householders would save themselves a lot of worry if they erected some wire-netting to protect their cabbages and other greenery.

A Continuous Moan

But will they do this? According to my experience of people who complain about rabbits, they will not. They will continue to moan until some enterprising member of the community gets in touch with the Ministry of Agriculture, and a pests officer will eventually appear to investigate the damage. Then an attempt will be made to pin the liability on to some neighbouring owner of occupier, who will be advised to abate the nuisance himself, or pay for official help. When the " culprit " has footed a stiff bill, he will probably feel that he might have supplied the aggrieved householders with wire-netting free of charge, because he cannot possibly predict how often a similar bill will have to be paid in the future.

Here we have a problem. My own opinion is that if these rabbits are not sufficiently numerous to cause visible harm on agricultural land, nor are ever likely to became a menace, the householders ought to guard their own produce, although this is not a proper interpretation of the law at present. It is nevertheless common sense. Even in byegone times, long before the Pests Act was passed, I occasionally had experience of the same difficulty, and I have never failed to be impressed by the average householder's lack of sympathy towards the man over the fence who reputedly harboured rabbits.

A Glaring Example

A glaring example concerned a cottager whose greenstuff was being nibbled in an un-netted garden. He threatened violently to report me to the estate factor for gross neglect; but he did not consider that his garden adjoined thousands of acres of standing bracken, from which no man on earth could have eradicated rabbits. I solved this problem by presenting the man with a roll of netting which had once been used for raising pheasants. But he gave no indication that I had done him a favour.

Someone may suggest that the time is now ripe for forming a Rabbit Clearance Society on the outskirts of my friend's market town and farther afield. This would certainly relieve individual owners and occupiers of irritating requests to control small numbers of elusive pests, and relieve them also of the threat of legal proceedings; but it is doubtful whether rabbits are sufficiently evident yet in, say, 10,000 acres of the surrounding countryside to justify such a society. It is true that owners and occupiers ought not to wait until their land is again infested before they take vigorous action to check the nuisance. They ought to control it at the outset; but, human nature being what it is, no one willingly pays out cash for meagre and apparently unimportant returns.

There is the official aspect to be considered too. As far as I can gather, any society formed for the eradication of rabbits does not automatically receive official blessing. It must satisfy the Department concerned (and continue to satisfy it each year) that it is being conducted in a thorough and efficient fashion. And audited accounts must be submitted to support claims for the cash grant, which is 50 per cent of the total expenditure. But one must bear in mind that the total expenditure has also to gain official approval first. In other words, a clearance society cannot squander money then hope to claim half of it from the Government.

Further, the society must be a legally constructed body, either by registration under the Industrial Provident Societies Act, or as a company. In any case it must conform to rigid rules, so that it cannot be dissolved without due formality. This may be described as Red Tape, but we are bound to admit that an organisation which is run partly on public money must be prepared to accept a certain amount of discipline. It is hardly necessary to point out, however, that this strict supervision, this official demand for a detailed account of everything, is quite enough to prevent many a person from joining a rabbit clearance society.

Minimum Operational Area

I have already quoted 10,000 acres as the operational area of a society, but this is probably a minimum. Twice that acreage would make a good working unit, where rabbits were not particularly numerous; and if it had some natural boundaries impassable to rabbits, such as rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and sea, so much the better. Individual rabbits do tend to haunt a comparatively small bit of country, but they will travel a long way when breeding time arrives, or when food becomes scarce at home. I have been assured by an Australian that rabbits crossed their great central desert; so a mile or two in Britain should present no difficulty to them. In fact, the rapid spread of myxomatosis a few years ago indicates that rabbits wander about over a wider range than we thought.

About three months ago I learned that two clearance societies were in process of being formed in Kincardineshire, my native county. One was designed to operate in the neighbourhood of Banchory; the other in the neighbourhood of Stonehaven. So far I have not heard anything further about the Stonehaven society, but the Banchory one is run by a chairman, a vice-chairman, a secretary, and over twenty committee members. At the first meeting fifty people had agreed to join, and they will be charged at the rate of one shilling per acre annually.

There is a touch of irony in this. It was near Banchory on Deeside that myxomatosis first appeared in Scotland. It started on the farm of Balrownie, and an admission was made on the front page of a Dundee paper that it arrived by artificial means. At that time the spreading of myxomatosis by hand was, of course, quite legal. But the fact remains that it has served no permanently useful purpose in Kincardineshire, nor anywhere else for that matter. As I said once in the past, it merely paved the way for designated areas. One can hardly believe that landowners and farmers would have accepted legal compulsion in the rabbit killing business without a tremendous fuss, if they had not been firmly convinced that rabbits were down and out for evermore.

This mention of Banchory reminds me that tourists who use the elevated Cairn Mounth road, which runs through lovely conifer woods, grouse moor, and deer forest between the Deeside village and Fettercairn, will be able to have tea now, and perhaps buy something of Scottish interest, at the Clatterin Brig; for a restaurant-cum-shop was opened there on May 23 by Prince Georg of Denmark. This project has three directors, namely: The Hon. Mrs. John Bowes-Lyon, Fettercairn House, and her two daughters, Princess Anne of Denmark and Miss Diana Bowes-Lyon.

This restaurant-cum-shop will cater for parties or casual visitors, and will sell tweeds, cashmeres, woollen goods, porcelain, pottery, and locally manufactured articles. It will close in September, and appears to be modelled on the same lines as the Retreat Lodge in Glenesk, a few miles over the hills, except that it has no museum.

A good hide by a "sitty" tree, but not without its blind spot.

The Young Shot

A Day at Pigeon

by Petrel

ANYONE with a schoolboy's knowledge of the Bard and unfortunate enough to dwell, last Friday night, within a mile of the old farm up the road, will appreciate why we have rechristened its tenant Macbeth. For like the thane of Glamis, if not so permanently, he hath murdered sleep in no uncertain fashion. Whether he had been reading "Taproot" I know not, but the fact remains that he saw in the carbide banger machines an easy way of keeping the pigeon off his young kale, and installed a pair of these engines to the extreme detriment of local slumber.

I first heard reports of these bangers, in the most literal sense, shortly after returning from a noisy day in London. He's bound to turn off the tap, I thought, at 8 p.m. and again a couple of hours later, but when the church clock struck eleven and the detonations were still occurring at intervals of a minute, I began to have my doubs. One-forty-five found me still tossing and turning on my couch and listening for the next explosion. And so it continued until the dawn of Saturday morning, rendering my Hippo Repeater, the gift of a fellow fowler who shares my reluctance at early rising, for once redundant. I set out for the pigeon grounds with the noise of this infernal machine still ringing in my ears, and I could still hear it reverberating in the distance, long after I motored out of rifle range.

A Slight Advantage

In one respect this noisy device proved an advantage to pigeon shooters of like mind who were early astir, for it kept the birds on the move in the vicinity of the kale which it protected. In all other respects it proved a darned nuisance, and I am surprised that public opinion tolerates this disturbance even where pigeon, rooks and other winged predators constitute a major threat to agricultural land. The carbide banger is an effective deterrent to avian crop robbers but there is no reason for its continuance all through the night. After sundown it constitutes a public nuisance, and its use thereafter means only that its operator is too lazy to turn off the tap and then start the machine again with the dawn. After complaints about sleepless nights from his immediate neighbours, the farmer in question now makes a practice of shutting off his banger after dark on a Friday and not setting it off again until the dawn of Monday morning. Thus is reached a ridiculous compromise, for pigeon do not observe a five day week, and for forty-eight hours are offered an undisturbed feed in peace and quiet.

Rapid and Regular

As long as this sort of scarer is in operation, it will effectively keep pigeon off a field. But to be really efficient, the noise must be consistently rapid and regular. Pigeon, and more especially rooks, become accustomed to the din and are quick to take their chance of a feed between bangs. Once the source of the noise is quietened, they will soon return, as is witnessed by the successful shooting that we have enjoyed on fields where scarers have been shut off temporarily for the benefit of week-end shooters. Familiarity breeds contempt is an old cliché which nevertheless applies to winged crop raiders.

Another proof of this is provided by the reaction of pigeon to a permanent decoy. In the top of a beech on the corner of a strip of woodland which has for several seasons proved an excellent pigeon stand, a wooden decoy has remained fixed ever since an enthusiastic shooter experimented with a pair of climbing irons and then lost his nerve when the time came for recovery. One would have thought that after a while, pigeon would have become suspicious of this dummy lodged in a well shot spot, but not a bit of it. Still they flock in there as soon as this decoy is sighted and one wonders whether it is because the pigeon's memory and powers of reasoning are scanty or due to the fact that there are so many birds about that there are always plenty of innocents which are genuinely lured by this permanent decoy.

The movements of pigeon are now becoming more predictable, and the week-end shooter is finding it easier to lay his plans. These around my district are now bound up with the laid corn. Which is why I found myself on the brink of a field of barley, the surrounds of which looked as though they had been purposely rolled, on the Saturday following the night of disturbance. Seven-thirty it was, and the sun was already high in a cloudless sky, which suited me as well as the pigeon, for not only was the approach march along the edge of the crop dry-trousered for a change, but the ears were that much riper and therefore more attractive to hungry birds after the rain of the past fortnight.

Choosing the Spot

As I approached the field, pigeon lifted lazily from the laid patches, to flop and soar on idle wings in all directions. Bounded on three sides by trees, this rectangular field nevertheless presented something of a problem, and after watching the movements of the birds for ten minutes or so, I realised that what had seemed the obvious place for an ambush a week ago, was not the right spot this morning. The flight line into and from the barley covered two angles. The best place, according to the strength of the flight appeared to be on the western side of the field, and that is undoubtedly the side to which the unthinking enthusiast would have made his way. But it always pays to look and think twice, and it was clear to me that although a hide on the western side would put me in the thick of things, I should shoot more effectively from the lee of the eastern wood, for although the birds were slightly less in number the advantages to the gun were greater; with the sun at his back he could shoot straighter and pigeon flying towards an ambush on this side would be to a great extent blinded by the light from the east. And so it turned out.

I set up shop on the side sheltered from the sun, but I moved position twice before I found the best place. In the first ambush I found myself hampered by tall trees, and in the second I was eaten alive by flies amongst the bracken. When at last I selected the final hide, it was on the edge of, and a little way out from the wood where a fallen, stunted ash concealed me from the front, while in the rear and on both sides, three elders acted as natural fly repellents. Decoys were set up on previously prepared hazel sticks, just protruding above the crop, and added to as birds were shot—write these off on a hot day, or at least pull off their heads before consigning them to the bag, for they will be fly-blown almost before you pick them up. Two other tips that come to mind on a hot day. Take along a close woven sack for the bag. If you shoot next to nothing the excuse is the same as for a goose bag. It's there to sit on. But if you do happen to make a respectable score, the pigeon will keep fresh and free from fly-blow which they will never do in the ordinary game bag.

Take also a drink for the dog. A plastic container for the water is light, pliable and will not break, and if you have trained the hound right, no bowl is necessary. Cupped hands will do instead.

As I anticipated, there was a lull after 9 o'clock. Pigeon move best at this season early, late, and for an hour or so after midday. The bag was less than a dozen, but the birds were there. The promise of better things from now on is great.

I referred just now to the predictability of pigeon. But although it is possible to reason why they should be working a certain area, and indeed to find one's reasoning correct, it is not always apparent, on reflection, exactly why the birds were there. I shall have more to say about this point next week.

A Countryman's Jottings

by Glancer

OTTERHUNTING is a curious sport, one that cannot faithfully be likened to any other form of hunting; it is more compounded of mysteries and contradictions than any other chase. It is mysterious, in the first place, that there should be sufficient scent on the water to hunt the animal at all; mysterious, at any rate, to the lay mind. It is contradictory in that the otter, by no means a brainless creature, in fact quite the contrary, seldom adopts one particular plan of campaign that would save his skin nine times out of ten, for if he were simply to go swimming away downstream soon after he was found, and keep on swimming, he would seldom be caught.

In other respects otterhunting differs. For instance, the pleasant mid-day break for lunch is distinctly unusual in the hunting field, though I did once have a few days with a private pack of foxhounds whose Master had a clever chauffeur who used to appear by magic, complete with picnic basket, about lunch time. The Master hunted hounds himself, and at the first sign of a check—a sign that was not as a rule long delayed—he would go eagerly for the food. A cigar followed, and it made a bizarre sight to see a man hunting hounds with one of those things sticking out of his mouth.

It is obviously much more reasonable and appropriate to call a halt at otterhunting, for the weather is likely to be hot, the day is a long one, and the whole affair is set in a more leisurely atmosphere. With such a social streak running through the thing, it is only natural that during the season one pack should go on a visit to another's country, there to show what it can do and enable followers to join in the jollifications of one sort and another.

These weeks away can be great fun, provided that one has a fairly sound constitution, for the custom seems to be to hunt all day and make merry most of the night. The change of scene is probably good for the hounds as well, particularly if they happen to have left a bad-scenting country for rivers that are more lively and exhilarating. It must be exciting for a hound, accustomed to the slow-flowing, muddy, midland or southern rivers to find himself transported to Wales or Yorkshire, on whose sparkling streams there is plenty of smell, and where otters abound.

Perhaps the most pleasurable part of otterhunting is to watch the hounds work out the overnight drag, where the quarry has wandered far away from the river itself. People who are opposed to hunting will never allow themselves to believe that the least important part of the thing is the catching of the quarry, but for many who go otterhunting this is true without a shadow of doubt. What they want to know is where the otter went and why he did so.

Best Foot Foremost

Visitors to the countryside do the strangest things. Recently, a boy and a girl, each aged about eighteen or twenty, were to be observed on a remote country lane, making a most halting and painful progress. They were stepping warily indeed, like those miserable holiday-makers who find themselves on the pebbly seashore, about a quarter of a mile from the sea when the tide is out, and wish to bathe.

Closer investigation as the car overtook the walkers revealed the curious fact that they were sockless and shoeless — though more or less adequately clad otherwise, according to modern standards.

Would they care for a lift? They would, so much was plain from their smiles of relief. Where were they going? They managed to name a village about a couple of miles along the road. Then conversation ceased, for they knew virtually no English and we knew virtually no Norwegian, which appeared to be their native tongue. So far as we could make out they had walked several miles over the hills. Why bare-footed? One will never know.

It is understandable that on a warmish day there is a tendency to discard this or that piece of clothing, but these two youngsters seemed to have started the day minus footwear, for they were not carrying shoes or boots. All very odd.

The Cat and the Ewe

We have as a neighbour a pure white cat; he, she or it does not carry a spot of colour of any description. He—for it is almost certainly a he—is a great character, and even those who do not care for cats find him interesting. He is also a mighty hunter. Wisely, in the circumstances, he confines his sporting expeditions to the immediate neighbourhood, his own garden and a couple of fields, which latter at the time of the following incident were being grazed by sheep and lambs.

The cat arrived home with a half-grown rabbit, and the gardener (rather surprisingly) rescued the creature and put it into some cover outside the garden at the edge of the field. The rabbit promptly ran out into the open and squatted. The cat was put indoors, but returned half an hour later, in the manner of cats, to start a methodical search for its stolen dinner. The rabbit, I was glad to observe, had meanwhile pottered off, and luckily it had gone in a safe direction.

Eventually, having failed to locate the rabbit in the garden the cat started to investigate the field. In due course he came face to face with a truculent looking ewe. The ewe stamped a forefoot. The cat went down, hunched back, ears flat, spitting like a wild one. The ewe hesitated a moment and looked as though she would depart ignominiously, then suddenly changed her mind and went for the cat violently with her forefeet and, apparently, with her teeth. The cat fled instantly.

The terrier bitch, who had watched the incident from an upstair window with me, was growling away for all she was worth, threatening to kill the cat at the first opportunity, brave enough when there was no chance of an immediate meeting! The cat had worsted her over and over again, but she is a very small terrier, and the cat is a dog-killer, almost.

I know nothing of the relationship of cats and sheep, and I do not think I have ever seen them meet face to face before, but I should have expected them to pass on their respective ploys without any show of animosity; indeed, I should have expected them to ignore each other completely. Perhaps there is an innate mistrust? At the time this took place the lambs were well grown, and the mother sheep need not have felt any anxiety about her offspring.

Mole Trouble

An old chap recently arrived on the farm that virtually surrounds our garden and offered to get rid of all the moles on its two hundred or so acres for the sum of £25 (half at starting and half at completion). In desperation, having tried everything he knew without success, the farmer agreed. What happened in the neighbouring fields after that is not recorded, but in a remarkably short space of time every mole from miles around had arrived in our garden, and they were playing merry hell with attempts to grow vegetables.

How does one get rid of moles? Poisoned worms, chopped up small? Traps? Bottles sunk in the ground so that the wind whistles in the necks? Perhaps. One can catch a few of the brutes in an old-fashioned (now unprocurable) sort of half-barrel trap; some may be scared by whistling winds; perhaps the odd youngster may be poisoned! Yet the moles remain, and in our soil one single mole, let alone a congregation, can be a very great nuisance indeed.

Bean Behaviour

Speaking of the garden, an ancient friend in the village remarked the other day that all his runner beans were going up their poles the "wrong way round"—anti-clockwise.

Not having anything better to say, I remarked that these atom bombs and such could account for anything, and it was no wonder the beans had got muddled. The only wonder was that they grew at all.

The ancient was more matter of fact. "Its happened before these old bombs was ever thought about," he said, "And it means that we'll have a lot of rain and no sun in August, and a bad crop into the bargain."

Rough Time Coming for Rats

It was comforting to learn that the rodent operators of southern England have been attending a "refresher course." No doubt the same opportunity has come the way of lucky chaps elsewhere, and some sparkling conversation has enlivened many an evening after the serious work of refreshing the mind has been accomplished. Its no good having an operator on rodents unless he is right-bang up to date on all technical, mechanical and chemical developments. Refresher courses are very much the vogue nowadays, and apply to all worthwhile occupations.

Perhaps, whilst the operators were assembled, exchanging experiences, listening to lectures, discussing the complications consequent upon the demise of the gin-trap, the rats and the mice were holding their own conversations elsewhere, planning how best to meet the new threat, and making merry in the evenings . . . whilst the rodent operator's away, the rats will play.

Information Wanted

I came across a photo of a nice little terrier with the following lines written on the back. Can anyone suggest their origin?

"If this be all and no shore bounds
The unknown seas on which you sail—
No paradise for little hounds!—
If love and loyalty avail
No whit and faith that shamed the men
Upon whose hearts you laid your spell,
Whose home is desolate—Why then,
Sleep well, sleep well!

The owner of the photo would much like to know who wrote them.

Cost of Living

Quite one of the best "house magazines" nowadays is the one called "John Peel Jottings," sent out by the Cumberland firm of Redmayne —and the following story comes out of it. A well-known wandering minstrel in Cumberland eked out a living by playing an old tin whistle at village fairs and the like. He suffered from a fairly continual thirst. One day someone asked him if he had ever been married, and he answered: "Just once, but after a week or twae Aah fund oot she could sup mair ale than me, and Aah says, 'My lass, thoo mun be goin'—its not a tin whistle thoo wants, but a brass band!'"

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters and photographs are invited for this page. They should be as brief as possible, and the names and addresses of senders must be given, though these need not necessarily be published. Correspondence should be addressed to The Editor, The Shooting Times & Country Magazine, 29 Old Bond Street, London, W.1. 'Phone: HYDe Park 2556/2557.

GLASS EYES

Sir,—I note "Auceps'" remarks regarding glass eyes suitable for taxidermy in the July 18 issue.

I noticed last year that these were offered for sale in Denmark and whilst they may have originated in East Germany it could be that an enquiry might prove to be useful. The company in question has retail and, I believe, wholesale departments and the name and address is as follows:—

Axel og Ludvig Svendsen,
Studiestraede, 48,
Copenhagen, V.

Perhaps some concern in this country could manage to import a few suitable lines.

J. H. ADAMS,
Leek, Staffs.

Sir,—With reference to "Auceps'" *cri-de-coeur* in *The Shooting Times*, for glass eyes, we use these extensively in the fur trade when mounting heads on sable and mink ties; also fox when in fashion, but the call being limited, restricts the number to two sizes.

The sable and mink eyes have gold or brown irises and are approximately ¼-inch diameter; the fox eyes are brown with a white surround and corners each side and are approximately ⅛-inch diameter. With the smaller eyes it is possible to remove the paint and substitute any colour required, but the colour in the fox eyes is glazed in.

Thank you for publishing my letter on the formation of The Redditch and District Gun Club. This is now flourishing and the members now enjoy the benefits of a new pavilion which is greatly appreciated when the weather turns bad. There is a possibility that a bar may be added at a later date.

The C.L.A. Game Fair demonstration at Ullingswick, Herefordshire, was a great success and much appreciated by all those interested in shooting who attended. May we have many more of them.

T. R. HARRISON.
Chairman, Redditch and District Gun Club, High Street, Worcester.

Sir,—During the war and just after, when glass eyes for humans were difficult to obtain, many of these eyes were made in plastic by dental surgeons and their technicians. I myself have tried several, and found that a reasonable eye could be made without much trouble, and was most interesting to make. There are several methods of constructiong these eyes, and I am sure if any of the amateur taxidermists discussed them with their dentist some solution could be found. I should be most pleased to help in any way I can if anyone would like to get in touch with me at the address below.

J. F. MARSHALL,
Sweet Apple Cottage, Nash,
Bletchley, Bucks.

A reader sends us this photograph which he entitles: "The good old days; bailiffs' shoot in Essex in the 1930s."

VISIT TO BEOLEY KENNELS

Sir,—I think you will be interested to learn that, by kind invitation, I visited Beoley Kennels. The day passed all too quickly, for there was so much to be seen—and said! and I soon realised that Mr. Moxon is indeed a very busy man.

Mr. and Mrs. Moxon treated me with great hospitality, and their two young daughters proved to be most interesting and knowledgable canine students. It would not surprise me to see one, or both handling at field trials in the near future.

I could write pages about my visit, but I must keep my remarks within the compass of a letter. I have, over the years, been a raw meat feeder of gundogs, but I will admit here and now, not to the extent of Mr. Moxon.

The morning meal used to be of best quality biscuits (given dry) and the evening meal was raw meat. The day on which I was at the kennels was a hot, sunny one, and of all the dogs that I saw, and had paraded for my benefit I did not see one scratch or shake itself—proof that the dogs were in fine fettle. Warm, sultry weather is always a test for canine condition.

I saw Bekesbourne Tosh, and, although his greying muzzle told of the veteran was in point of years, he was a happy and contented old chap. The proof of the pudding is always in the eating, so I say that Mr. Moxon's idea of raw meat diet is a sound one.

Young labradors were put to the water test in my presence, as also in the rabbit-pen. Spaniels were also taken to the pen, and put through their paces, and there were "on show" many that I would have liked to have taken home. If I did not see some high-class trials dogs—well, I am a poor judge of young material in the matter of future gundogs.

I noticed there were three rabbit-pens, one small, one medium, and one very large which was just being completed. This spacious pen will be the answer to people who tell me that the rabbit-pen is too artificial, and that dogs soon come to know when they are in one. But this huge pen will, I think, deceive both rabbit and trainee. The rabbits I saw were bolting well and I am sure that when Trabella and Good Friday are placed in the new pen, conditions for both dog and rabbit will be most real.

Mr. Moxon, I noticed, had both duck and poultry in the pen, a splendid idea indeed, because the dog pupil is introduced to them in proper manner, with the result that the dogs become safe and trustworthy with farmyard stock. I was most interested to see the sheepdog puppy; he looked to be an intelligent little fellow, and it certainly will be interesting to know of how Mr. Moxon gets on with his training.

"Blood will tell," is an old saying, and before I left two baby spaniels were shown to me working and hunting in thick grass for the dummy, both showed style and perseverance in their questing and retrieving. These two youngsters were descendants of the Bekesbourne Rozzi, the trial winner, a bitch that was very highly thought of.

I thank Mr. Moxon for a memory of my visit that will always be most pleasant.

T. L. JONES,
Morriston, Glam.

THE WOODPIGEON—FRIEND OR FOE?

Sir,—Is D. A. Wooley of Cornwall a trifle upset by not receiving a reply from the local pest control officer, or, on the other hand a "wee" bit jealous of our old friend and the man who I take my hat off to — "Tower-Bird"? It appears from his letters that he wishes to keep the pigeon menace down, but in his own way. I, for one, would certainly be sorry to see the pigeon disappear from our landscape in the same disgusting way as the rabbit. But I have no compunction whatsoever of literally blowing a pigeon off its nest.

Has our correspondent ever seen a pigeon flock descend on a cherry orchard in Kent, and then cast an eye on the aftermath? Also does he realise that if the local pest control officer answered every letter requesting "free shooting" he would have to employ a "bevy" of secretaries)?

Why does not Mr. Woolley join a wild-fowling club and he would have all the "free" shooting he required, and maybe a lot more than he could contend with.

Wherever he got the idea from that "T.-B." shoots an abundance of game, i.e. pheasants and partidges, I just do not know. If he has read *The Shooting Times* for twelve years he must have turned a blind eye to "T.-B.'s" ar-

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ticles. If there is another man living in this era who has done more for the wildfowler and rough shooter, I would dearly like to meet him. I would suggest that "T.-B." has forgotten more about wildfowling and other country matters than Mr. Woolley will ever know.

I am not a farmer, or a gamekeeper, or even a pest control officer, but a humble sailor, and, I sincerely hope, a sportsman.

I am sorry for the fact that this letter is late as I invariably receive delayed copies of *The Shooting Times*.

FOWLER,
R.N., Malta.

Sir,—So Mr. D. A. Woolley does not consider the woodpigeon to be a menace to agriculture. On this farm we planted this year two acres of purple cabbage for bullock feed. Despite scarecrows, shooting, and constant patrolling of the field, there is not one plant which has not been attacked by these vermin. There are no large flocks and this is the work of only a few birds. I have shot five or six, which does not sound many, but not at any time have I seen more than three birds at work.

I am afraid that Mr. Woolley's sense of values is sadly at fault if he thinks that the sport shown by pigeon is a compensation for the damage they do. His statement that vermin was not regarded as a menace during the 19th century when larger bags of game were obtained is plain nonsense. During that time the big estates were adequately keepered and vermin was kept down. It is because of the decline of the big estates with their staffs of keepers that vermin has become such a real threat both to sport and to agriculture.

DAN RUSSELL,
Exford, Somerset.

MAGISTRATES PLEASE NOTE

Sir,—Comments in the July 4 issue on the case referred to under the above heading, brings to mind a similar experience which I had. Back in 1925 I came in contact with a very unscrupulous farmer over the boundary who eventually registered a prosecution against me for game trepass. Whilst in no way condoning the action of the poaching case at Frodsham I wish to point out a small detail that may have been overlooked. Brought before the "beaks" I was fined two pounds and costs—three pounds in all and whilst no order was made for confiscation nor was there any mention of licence at the time I eventually received in due course a notification that under section eleven of the Gun Licence Act my licence was null and void.

Immediately I consulted my solicitors and subsequently after they had taken Counsel's opinion, I received the following letter. "We find that your present licence is null and void but after studying the Act can find nothing that will prevent you from taking out a new licence to run to the current date of expiry."

Can anyone enlighten me on the following? Out of 100 pheasant eggs put down under broodies we have not hatched a single chick. We allowed our broodies to sit 8 days over the period and eggs when broken were found to contain fully fledged live chicks. Mallard eggs we were luckier with, but last year and this year have had practically all our ducklings stolen at the age of 7 weeks although this year we hatched miles away from last year's scene.

Finally may I give a word of warning about giving lifts to hikers. Travelling down to Anglesey for a week's wildfowling in January we had trouble with our radiator and stopped at a garage just outside Bangor. A friend who had given a hiker a lift pulled up to give assistance and whilst we were concentrating on the trouble the hiker concentrated on a very valuable pair of binoculars. Unfortunately we did not discover their loss until we arrived in Anglesey.

J. BENTLEY,
Liversedge, Yorks.

FAMILY PARTIES OF PARTRIDGES

Sir,—The following incident may interest readers. My wife heard a partridge calling very excitedly (I can't hear a partridge's call). We both rushed to the window to see if we could see the bird. I suddenly saw it fly out into the middle of the open grass field in front and then race like a greyhound in a crouching position to where it had come from in the hedge and nettles. Then suddenly out from the nettles came a procession of 19 young and five old (three cocks and two hens), a sight I have never seen before.

I have seen 19 with three old, mother, father and uncle? This was either a covey of 19 and mother, father and uncle with a barren pair attached or two coveys with both parents and uncle—I fancy the former. Anyway it was grand to see some young have survived the cold, damp and hail.

I ran out into the road to see them across to the cornfield for which they seemed to be making but although I stood watching for some time they failed to cross while I was there.

F. A. C. MUNNS,
Folkestone, Kent.

A group of guns and spectators at the annual clay pigeon shoot of the Hull and East Riding Wildfowlers' Association, a report of which appears on page 627.

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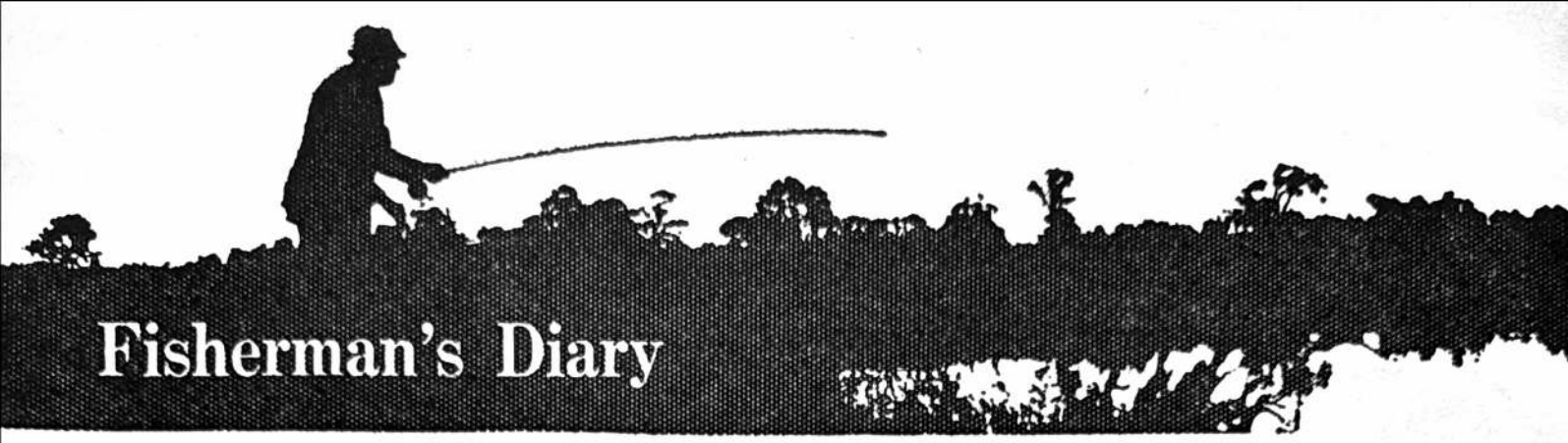

Fisherman's Diary

BANK Holidays got off to a very slow start when they were proclaimed in 1871. The Banks and a few other institutions such as customs and excise posts closed down and the staff had a holiday. The rest of the country went about its normal business.

Acceptance of the holiday in shop, offices and factories was so slow a process that it is impossible to date it, but by 1900 the holiday was well established in the London area and, once established, it became the outstanding holiday of the year for millions who worked from Monday morning to Saturday night. Perhaps equally important in social history is the fact that it became the woman's holiday—the one day in the year when she went out instead of cooking.

In those early times, too, it became an established day for angling parties and angling matches, a convention continued into the present although the meaning and importance of the August Bank Holiday have changed immeasurably.

Except to workers in retail shops and a few others in special jobs it is now only an extra long week-end among week-ends that normally start on Friday night and end on Monday morning. Its importance is artificially maintained by sporting events and other outdoor entertainments planned for it, but it is no longer the only working man's holiday between Easter and Christmas.

Bank Holiday match fishing has suffered a similar decline. The married match angler who competes every Sunday (and possibly on many Saturdays as well) usually forgets fishing for a day and takes his family on jaunts or excursions in which wife and children can share.

The holiday is perhaps most valuable to trout fishermen who live so far from open trout water that they cannot comfortably travel and fish for a few hours during the normal week-end. Good luck to them and all others who will fish next Monday.

Cheap Severn Salmon

I read that more than 5,000 salmon were caught in the Severn last season and I hope when I get the chance to study the River Board's report to sort out roughly what proportion of the fish were caught in free water and in stretches leased by Birmingham A.A.

The fishing on several quite productive salmon stretches of the Severn is held directly by the Board and can be fished by anyone holding a Severn River Board salmon licence. This is the free fishing to which I referred above. As a salmon licence costs 7s. 6d. a day, 30s. a fortnight and three guineas a season it is cheap fishing for a day or week for holiday anglers.

It may be argued that it is not free fishing because of the licence, but that is hardly true. A licence is required to fish anywhere in the Board's area and except in the fisheries held directly by the Board there is some extra payment for the fishing itself.

The B.A.A. has several stretches of Severn salmon water—more, I believe, than the Board—but since a season's membership covering all the Association's waters costs only 20s., salmon fishing is still cheap.

Windermere Perch

For many years the Freshwater Biological Association has carried out experiments with the perch of Lake Windermere, first by reducing excessive numbers and then by trapping, measuring, marking and releasing fish.

Many of the findings are on a fairly high scientific plane, but some facts emerge which may be of direct interest to anglers. Reducing complex calculations to simple generalisations can lead to error, and the Windermere lessons may not apply to perch in other waters. The following paragraphs should be read with those provisos in mind.

Windermere contained vast quantities of very small perch whose average rate of growth was only 5g. (about 3dr.) a year. Intensive trapping and removal of perch began in 1941 and by the end of that season the population had been halved. The remaining fish started to grow rapidly and put on 10g. a year. Further trapping up to 1948 reduced the original population by 97 per cent. Every year the rate of increase in weight improved until now the perch are growing eight times as quickly at in 1940. Old fish "set in their growth pattern" do not respond. The growth rate has not increased proportionately to the gradual reduction of stock but can be traced mainly to the impetus given in 1941 by the sudden removal of 50 per cent of the fish. The average weight of trapped perch has risen from 24g. to 100g.

Finally, a practical note for the lake and reservoir perch angler in late autumn and early winter. "In October, November and December perch congregate off The Ferry House while migrating out into deeper water." Find the congregation point in your local lake and sport should be assured!

Stinking Fish

I have been dipping into the recently revised edition of "The Englishman's Food," by J. C. Drummond and Anne Wilbraham. The exhaustive work of more than 500 pages discusses food production, distribution and consumption in Mediaeval and Tudor England and in the four following centuries.

Not until steam powered ships and the railways quickened the time from fishing ground to port and from port to inland town did housewives get reasonably fresh fish. Most of it before that era was stale and a lot of it was stinking. Dried, salted and pickled fish, and the iced fish of the last century are not, of course, regarded as fresh fish.

In a work that goes into such detail I was surprised at the paucity of references to freshwater fish (other than salmon and eels) as an article of diet. They were mentioned in conjunction with sea fish as being constantly on the tables of the rich, but I came to the conclusion that the review is too narrowly based (only in this connection) through lack of contemporary references.

Before the industrial revolution a majority of England's population lived in rural areas and I have no doubt even the poorest families who wished to do so had freshwater fish at least once a week—but this consumption was not recorded in the letters, diaries and accounts on which our knowledge of social history is based.

Penalties

The book referred to in the previous note is no mere catalogue of facts. It is written in a lively and interesting style and brightened by numerous appropriate quotations including both the curious and the humourous.

It is common knowledge that various statutes restricting fishing date back to the early 13th-century, and that these were periodically revised or augmented. Statutes make dry reading, but we lap up police and court proceedings arising from them. So it was in early days. Instead of dreary extracts from the law we get human cases. In 1349 three men were convicted of catching "too small fish" on the east side of London Bridge. More than 200 years later an entry in a contemporary diary read: "The xxii day of Marche dyd a woman ryd a-bowt Chepesyd and Londun for bryngyng younge frye of dyvers kynd unlafull, with a garland a-pone her hed with strynges of the small fysse."

Riding offenders around the town draped with appropriate symbols of their crimes seemed a popular punishment. Two men who sold a pig on a fish day were driven around wearing necklaces of pigs' trotters.

August Memories

I vaguely thought of opening these notes with a fanfare on August, but the idea petered out through lack of enthusiasm. From an angling point of view I have little time for the month in freshwater or saltwater for game, coarse or sea fish. A personal quirk, of course, which need not and I hope will not influence anyone else.

Even when I tried to retrieve the situation by going highbrow and quoting a poet on the matter the only thing I could think of was a childhood verse which was to me then a completely puzzling couplet about a sea shell:

then apply
Its polished lips to your attentive ear
And it remembers its august abodes.

Large shell to ear I would listen to its sounds and the couplet, wondering what August had to do with the matter.

CORIDON

The Smallbore Bisley

by Stats

THE odd Jeremiahs who stood on the side-lines and predicted a dismal Bisley were confounded by yet another record entry for, in spite of no Railways Match to bring that few extra for one day, the total exceeded 1,400 and was a dozen or so more than last year. So those who believe that the small-bore game has reached its peak were proved wrong. Mind you, examination of the figures does send a slight chill down the spine when it is seen that entries for the class "A" Aggregate declined by 20% and that only increases in the unsquadded events made up for this falling off. Nor can one be wildly excited by the realisation that the part of the meeting, originally provided as a sort of consolation for the introduction of squadding has now outgrown what might be termed the championship proper.

If these are the simple facts, the explanations will, no doubt, be legion and complicated in the extreme. The anti-expert group will say that it proves what they told us; that because he can no longer score his strings of "possibles," the top-notcher does not want to play any more. Of course it could be that the top-notchers were all there, but that those folk who only just reach Class "A" realised that the dice were too heavily weighted and sought a holiday week a little less fraught with exasperation. Others may claim that the new targets have damped enthusiasm without killing interest. And there is always the point of view that everything is fine and dandy. But just in case, it might be worth while finding out somehow or other.

A Rainy Journey

Those who began their journey to Bisley on Friday were not likely to have forgotten their wet-weather equipment if anything else slipped their memory. The road travellers motored along to the clack of screen-wipers and a mighty bow wave, exchanging forced jokes with their companions about leaky tents and huts or recalling events—in which they were not personally involved—where someone came near to drowning with water from the roof of the firing point. But despite this discouraging start the opening day was reasonably fine and Sunday—when it seemed that most of the unsquadded competitors came—brought the bright and breezy Bisley weather back again.

However, while the week-end competitors were trying their luck with the new targets, the Dewar trialists were doing battle on the old ones. Perhaps a few crashes were not entirely unexpected, but three o'clock and nine o'clock "nines" were hardly due to nerves. For some reason or another a legend has grown up round the Worplesdon range that all one has to do is to lie there and pour 'em in. Anyway, those who knew the drill set a cracking pace in the first trial and even the Sunday morning shoot did not bring the scores down very much.

By midday the team was known. Seven of the 1957 team were in again, a few old hands returning to the fold and two ladies for the first time ever. Margaret Gibbs and "Rusty" Townsend were the two ladies whose performance was all the more meritorious because they had started their day at 5.30 a.m. or thereabouts with a Randle trial. Or thereabouts so far as "Rusty" was concerned at any rate, for it is whispered that she was roused by a special team of knockers-up and arrived at the firing-point in record time with most of the practice card minutes used up. Stan Burgin and John Hall were representative of last year's team and the old hands, both coming up with a full house in the match. Three more 400s were recorded, the best being one with 34x by Reg. Card. Then came seven 3,999s, seven points off by the top twelve. It is the custom not to say too much about the score until all the teams have fired, but one can say that the total was quite satisfactory. Captain Claude Sonley created quite a precedent by qualifying for the team and firing in the match.

By the time the Dewar match started the Unsquadded Aggregates were completed. Perhaps Jim Fardon was out to show that the British National Target was not intended for boys, but with a score of 892 he romped home by twenty points and had put up what appeared to be invincible scores of 297 in both the paper shoots. So far as these were concerned, the forecasters were proved wrong for Arthur Skinner ultimately won both the *News of the World* and the *Daily Mail* with 298.

Not One Tie

And so to Monday and the 100 yards shoot, the first in the squadded aggregate. In Class "A," Jeff Pope had a clear win with 393 and the distribution of scores gave a pretty clear indication that the people who shot for inner cartons on the decimal targets were going to have a definite advantage now. J. R. Churchill, Jr., of Abingdon, won the Rutland Cup in Class "B" with 385 and then there was a gap until 382 was reached. Class "C" produced an interesting result for M. P. Singleton's winning score of 390 was not only better than the previous class, but was six points ahead of the next man. Class "D" was won by T. Wilson of Sunderland with 376 and so the day ended without a single tie.

Higher Mathematics

Nor did Tuesday throw any strain on stats. in deciding the destination of the trophies for again each event produced a single top score. By now the little pieces of paper were beginning to appear as competitors kept an eye on the Aggregate leaders. But it proved to be rather a complicated business since fortunes changed so drastically. Monday's Class "A" winner did not appear in Tuesday's prize list and the first two on Tuesday were out of Monday's. Someone remarked that Hollerith and Powers Samas were joining forces to put the whole thing on a punched card system next year.

However, the better type of mathematician decided that du Plessis from South Africa led in Class "A" with scores of 392 and 389. Class B was almost impossible to calculate. In Class "C" Singleton collected the trophy for the second time. In Class "D," Monday's winner took third place on the following day and held the lead.

Wednesday brought Class "A's" turn to shoot first in the 50 yards event. Conditions were as good as can ever be found at Bisley, a steady light and the flags swishing so gently. And so a few made the most of the opportunity. True we did not have the 22 full scores of 1957 but five competitors scored 395 which when taken to the .45 gauge gave John Hall the trophy. Du Plessis was with the five and now out in front with an aggregate of 1,176 for the three events, six points ahead of Powell.

C. L. Scott of Maidenhead, came up with 390 to win the Class "B" trophy, and in Class "C" Singleton was again on top and looked a certain Aggregate winner. Wilson was still doing very nicely in Class "D" with a total of 1126 followed by T. O. Minter of Burnham with 1,122 and G. W. Jeffery from Rugby with 1,121.

When Thursday came it brought typical Bisley weather with it; a bright light and a changing wind which might well make nonsense of the positions to date. And so it happened. Du Plessis who, one would have thought, had it all sewn up, never caught up with the conditions and returned a disastrous 378. Powell on the other hand scored 390 to win the match by four points and consequently the Aggregate with a total of 1560. He was followed by T. J. Knight, City of Birmingham, with 1,554, P. Knowles, York Railway Institute 1,549, W. B. Godwin, City of Birmingham 1,549. Du Plessis, alas, shared fifth place with G. B. Russell of Watford 1,548.

Then in Class "B" a strange situation; entries down from 221 to 219 and D. Ross, Glentanar, who finished second to R. A. Cumming of Cambridge University in the No. 4 competition came from nowhere, so it seemed, to win the Aggregate with 1,524 two points ahead of J. R. Churchill, Jr.

In Class "C" J. A. de Havilland, Cambridge University, won the last event with 384. Singleton was thirteen points behind, but had amassed such a lead that he was an easy winner of the Aggregate. In Class "D" Wilson dropped to 366. Minter was 40 off and Jeffery returned 369. But B. P. Blaydes of Leeds University who had started with what appeared

The winning English team.

to be a disastrous 360 had an outstanding 376 this time and this was enough for him to steal in front of Wilson and win the Aggregate by three points.

If all this was somewhat tantalising it certainly made the shoot interesting—if you could keep in touch with the accountancy. It seems that this situation had the Press somewhat foxed as coverage was not conspicuously good—Wednesday's winners in Friday's paper. One noticeable exception, however, was Birmingham's *Evening Dispatch*, which published hot accurate news collected by a team of enthusiastic "amateurs." It did so happen that they had plenty to be enthusiastic about for the City of Birmingham boys had quite a week between them. When the international teams were picked after completion of the Aggregates half the English team came from this club and by Friday evening it had seven Roberts finalists in the last twenty.

On Saturday morning the range is strangely deserted except for those engaged in the internationals and the Queen Alexandra Cup. Those who have no more shooting to do are perhaps busy packing or out buying tomorrow's lunch. But back they come in the afternoon heavily disguised. Or so it seems when they appear in their finery after one has grown used to seeing them in shooting kit all the week.

England Wins

Those who had time to spare took one of the last opportunities of watching the experts in action, noting the relaxed nonchalance—apparently—with which they collect "bulls." To see one marksman look up suddenly just when it seems he is about to fire. And they too have felt the gentle chill behind the ears denoting a freshening wind and are happy they have learnt something of the art of shooting during the week. Watching the distribution of a well advertised sweet amongst the second English squad they are not convinced that therein lies the secret of this club's success although they may observe that the fun before the practice card keeps everyone relaxed and that whereas four of the shooters are seasoned internationals the fifth is in for the first time. Anyway, England won under the captaincy of Col. Sutton and Gilbert Sanders—celebrating 30 years with the N.S.R.A.—as secretary.

And then some of the team moved back again for the Queen Alex. to find the aiming marks of the decimal tragets distressingly small. The four counties made a staggering amount of noise with the time-limit and the skirmisher shooting and when all the smoke had died away Sussex had taken the trophy, their first success since 1933.

Already it is lunch-time—a light one for twenty of the competitors who are engaged in the afternoon. Two-thirty, the triggers are weighed, the siren goes and the last event—the British Championship—is on. The crowd behind with its telescopes is tense; very much more so than those doing battle on the firing point. This year it was more difficult to keep check of the progress of the contestants. And those who kept a record at fifty yards lost their places in the move up to hundred yards. And so it came about that nobody could say who had won when the sixtieth shot had been fired. In fact no one had won. And those who thought the new target would eliminate ties were indeed confounded for here we had a *triple* tie between J. Powell, Felbridge, T. J. Knight of City of Birmingham—the first two place winners in the Grand Aggregate and J W. Human of South Africa. Here was drama indeed; Powell out for the "double"; Knight to avenge the Aggregate result and Human with the opportunity of taking the Roberts overseas for the very first time. No wonder they were pale and determined. But the suspense was soon over; two 96s and a 97 and Tom Knight was carried away on the shoulders of his club mates.

And finally the move to the prize distribution and much banter as City of Birmingham members collected nine trophies; and much laughter as seven from the club came forward for their Roberts badges and Jerry Palmer began crediting their indoor clubs.

And that was all. Friend took leave of friend until the next meeting. And next year it seems pretty certain that Bisley will be a fortnight earlier and the Scottish later.

PRECISION SHOOTING

by Richard Arnold

"HOW did you get on at Bisley?" I greeted a smallbore acquaintance, only to be greeted with the reply that the new target was "impossible." I pursued the question, and I received the rather unusual statement that the shooter concerned felt that the average rifle was not good enough to enable a first-class shot *to score as he should*. He thought that the new targets would result in improvements in rifles. He added further that rifles were available, but the cost was too high.

This is an interesting point, and somehow I have a feeling that my friend may be right: perhaps the tools are not good enough for the job—or are they?

"Firing from a beautifully-contrived rest, at 500 yards he can put any number of consecutive balls within a space less than that occupied by a five-shilling piece; and it is said that he will not be contented until he can throw a bullet from the barrel of one rifle into the barrel of another placed at 500 yards' distance. His ordinary rifles are guaranteed, in the hands of a good marksman, to be true at the same distance within eight inches." These words, penned by Major H. A. Leveson, referred to experiments carried out by Sir Joseph Whitworth over a hundred years ago, when the hexagonal bored rifle, with mechanically fitting bullets, was introduced. The Whitworth rifle, of course, was used for many years by the National Rifle Association, for the second and final stages of the Queen's Prize, and it was a Whitworth rifle which, on that memorable July 2, 1860, was fired by Queen Victoria to open the first Prize Meeting at Wimbledon. This rifle was fixed in a mechanical rest and the bullet struck within a quarter of an inch of the absolute centre of the target, which was 400 yards distant.

Too Much for the Rifles

The N.R.A. experienced trouble time and time again when it was found that certain ranges and targets were too much for the accuracy of the rifles then in use. Is it possible that something similar is about to happen today with the N.S.R.A. and the new targets? We have had shooters' views from the human angle, dealing with the new target, but if it is going to test the accuracy of rifle as well as shooter, it is going to be a very good thing, because it will lead to improvements in both weapon and cartridge.

The enthusiast, however, who is anxious to try and achieve Sir Joseph Whitworth's goal, and place all his shots within the same bullet hole, must enlist the aid of mechanical rests to shoot from, because the human element, even at its most skilled, is comparatively unreliable. One cannot make comparisons between normal shooting from the shoulder at 100 yards and getting the average group with a rifle fired at the same distance and obtaining a group as small as .17in., centre to centre, when a rest is used. The two styles of shooting are poles apart.

Bench-rest shooting covers all calibres; covers all style of weapons, including muzzle-loaders, capping breech-loaders, and black powder arms. But, in the main, with the passage of time, American enthusiasts for this form of shooting have found that the .22 calibre rifle is the one likeliest to win, or be placed, in a fair proportion of matches. Popular cartridges are the .222 Remington (which I dealt with in a previous article), .219 Donaldson, .219 Zipper, and miscellaneous .22 "wildcats." The most successful rifle actions are bolt actions and modified Mausers, whilst extremely heavy and long barrels are the rule rather than the exception. Furthermore, a significant feature of the bench-rest rifles is the fact that the majority of the stocks are built specially for the shooter concerned, and are rather massive, often ugly looking, pieces of furniture.

But such a form of shooting cannot be skilled, one can hear the conservative shooter criticise. On the contrary, shot at ranges of up to 200 yards, mirage, and/or wind, can test the skill of the competitors severely. But what about marking and scoring? It is bad enough with ordinary competitions, hence the necessity for a backing card: how does one score accurately if the group is from .143 to .345 centre to centre?

Reticle Rule

Mr. J. B. Sweany, of California, devised a measuring instrument, known as a "Reticle Rule," and this consists of a six-inch precision scale which is read with a 4X magnifying glass, which also views a circular reticle set concentrically with the bullet holes of the group. Repeated readings on clean cut holes can be made, with this instrument, within an acceptable plus or minus error of .001in. Telescope sights are essential for this style of shooting, and the dot reticle is by far the most popular. There is no preference, however, for any special degree of magnification which varies from 12X up to 36X, though an average would indicate around 20X.

The lessons taught by precision shooting from the rest or bench, lessons learned as far back as 1854 by Whitworth and his assistant Westley-Richards, are still being learned today. The new target, the acceptance of frailty of the human element, the possibility that the average rifle is "not good enough" for consistently high scorings (assuming the human factor to be constant) may assist in bringing about new developments, new improvements in rifles and cartridges. The precision shooters, whether from the shoulder or the bench, will meet and conquer the new problem, and perhaps in due course Whitworth's ambition, the ultimate in accuracy, will be obtained.

Full-Bore Winners

The Queen's Prize, premier full-bore trophy at Bisley, was won this year by Major R. A. Fulton who thus maintained a family tradition, for his father, the well-known A. G. Fulton won the Prize three times, in 1912, 1926 and 1931, while his grandfather was successful in 1888. Major Fulton's winning score was 281. In the public schools championship, the Ashburton Shield was won by Repton with a score of 508 out of a possible 560. They beat Blundells by two points.

GUN GOSSIP

by Top Wad

SINCE my earlier remarks concerning the "furrowing" of .410 cartridge cases after firing, I have been besieged by letters from young shooters who say that they experience this deformation of the cartridges, although their guns are not bored out rook rifles, whose chambers may be slightly over-size. (Readers of this column will recall that this was one of my theories for the occurrence.) This set me wondering afresh, and had me coincidentally worrying, when, all of a sudden, the fired cases from my Belgian .410 began to show signs of this abnormality, after several thousands of cartridges had been shot with no apparent affect.

As soon as this began to happen, I carefully kept the spent cases, and when I had collected five indented on the trot, I decided that the time had come to seek a second opinion. Accordingly I sent the exhibits, with the case history, to the fountainhead of ballistic knowledge at Witton, explaining, deferentially, that I considered in the light of the evidence, that the ammunition and not the gun might be at fault. The following is the reply I received after the experts had investigated the matter:

"The slight collapsing of the paper tubes of small calibre case cartridges is not unusual, and as far as we are aware, has always been present. It is fortuitous that some batches of cartridges give more slightly collapsed tubes than others. The furrowing has been noticed in all weapons of all qualities, ranging from the very cheap converted variety to very expensive weapons.

"We think you will agree that the slight collapsing of the tube does not in any way affect the functioning of the cartridge or interfere with the performance, but even so we have thoroughly investigated the matter. During recent months we have been producing cases which do not give this slight collapsing of the tubes, and all future production will be of this modified design."

Indeed, I will agree wholeheartedly. I have shot just as well—or badly—no matter whether the case collapses or not. But what is especially gratifying is the knowledge that the backroom boys at Witton are aware of this discrepancy and have taken steps to rectify it, for even if it makes no difference to performance, this sort of thing is liable to start amateur ballisticians talking, and once they start, the "ordinary" shooter's confidence and performance is likely to suffer in consequence.

A Change Already

The sequel to this has been as immediate as it has been interesting. My .410 shooting partner who hitherto had always experienced this trouble—if you can call it that—in cases fired from his bored out .300 rook rifle, and was the instigator of my research, came to me this morning and reported that over the weekend he shot off the best part of a new box of .410 cartridges and that not one of them showed a trace of this "furrowing" or collapsing. That seems to be it, then. This slight abnormality looks as though it will disappear as old stocks are expended.

A correspondent from the smallest county has written to enquire about the weights of trigger pulls in shotguns. What should his be, he asks. In Joad tradition I replied it all depends. The right barrel trigger pull is generally a shade lighter than that of the left, as one can obtain a firmer "finger-full" grip on the rear trigger, and 3½ to 4lb. for the right, with 4 to 4½lb. for the left are weights that will meet with general approval. But individuals have their fancies, and I am one of those who likes his pulls on the strong side. Hair triggers are all very well for down-the-line professionals, where a light weight is an advantage, but being a deliberate rather than a snap shot, I prefer to be able to curl my finger round the trigger and to start pulling as I am swinging. Largely it is a matter of individual preference, although stock length and one or two other measurements come into it as we shall see in a future issue.

Corvine Cunning

by J. R.

HOW clever is a crow? I have found that their wariness at nesting time varies very greatly. There are some which sit so tight, especially on a wet and windy day, that by making, preferably, an up-wind approach, one can easily get under the nest and shoot them on it in broad daylight. Others, no matter at what stage in the incubation period, fly away before one can get anywhere near. For these a dusk or night attack is necessary. But the wariest crow that I have so far met is a hen which can distinguish between one motor-car and another.

This particular bird had its nest in an oak tree standing about sixty yards from the edge of a road which is a cul-de-sac leading to a farm and upon which there is very little traffic—an occasional delivery van, the daily milk lorry and the farmer's car or Land Rover. I missed her one day, a very long shot, as she flew off the nest. The next day I motored along the road in my grey Singer estate car until I was behind some elms near the oak, which offered a covered approach to it. I then stopped the car and got out, but the crow departed soon after I had begun the stalk.

Several times during the next ten days I tried driving along that road, but the crow always flew off the nest before I had even stopped the car. The more often I did it, the warier she became, until she reached the stage of departing when my car was still about a hundred and fifty yards away. So then I borrowed a friend's Morris Minor, also painted grey, but a different shade. This time she did not leave until I had stopped the Morris by the elms and was about to get out. On the following day I drove my Singer up there again and once more she left when I was a hundred and fifty yards away and had not even started to slow down.

Next I got a friend who owns a dark green Morris Oxford to drive me past the nest. The crow did not depart as we approached. My friend stopped his car behind the elms, I got out and he drove on. I then had not the slightest difficulty in walking up to the tree under cover of the elms and shooting at her on the nest.

I have written shooting "at," because for me this story has a very distressing ending. I actually performed—maybe on account of over-anxiety after so much planning and experiment—the absurd feat of clean missing the nest! The crow then flew off, putting the tree between herself and me, and I missed her with the second barrel too.

Childishly I expressed my annoyance at my ineptitude by prematurely blowing up the nest then and there, and I returned home in deepest disgust. But later I became quite reconciled to my failure, for it seemed to me that a bird clever enough to tell one car from another fully deserved to escape!

Clay Pigeon Shooting

Fixture List

Aug. 1: Parkstone R. & S.C., Hamworthy, Dorset. Club Shoot, 6 p.m.
Aug. 2: Hampshire Skeet Championship, Boldre & District G.C., Blazemore Farm, Boldre, near Lymington, 1 p.m.
Aug. 2: Blackpool G.C., Greenhalgh, Lancs. Open Shoot, Ball Trap System and Double-Rise, 2.30 p.m.
Aug. 2: Hayfield Gun Club, Members' Shoot, 2 p.m.
Aug. 3: Harrogate G.C., Yorks. Club Shoot, 1.45 p.m.
Aug. 4: Waltham Abbey G.C., Essex. Skeet, 2 p.m.
Aug. 4: West Riding of Yorkshire Open & Residential D.T.L. and Skeet Championship, Wetherby & District G.C.
Aug. 6: Devon Wildfowlers' Club Shoot, Haldon.
Aug. 7: Carlisle & District G.C. Cumberland-Westmorland Sporting Championship.
Aug. 8: Childrey C.P.S.C. Club Shoot, Little Coxwell, 6 p.m.
Aug. 9: Bedford Open Cash Skeet Shoot, Bedford & District G.C., Elstow.
Aug. 9: Leigh and District G.C. Club Shoot, 3 p.m., Windy Bank Farm, Glazebury.
Aug. 9: Cavendish G.C. Nottinghamshire Championship, 2.30 p.m.
Aug. 10: Parkstone R. & S.C., Hamworthy, Dorset. Club Shoot, 10 a.m.
Aug. 10: Reigate & District C.P.S.C. Open Shoot. Driven Grouse, 40 Skeet and 50 D.T.L. Clay Hall Farm. 10.30 a.m.
Aug. 13: Birmingham G.C., Rowney Green, Alvechurch. Members' Shoot, 6 p.m.
Aug. 15: Parkstone R. & S.C., Hamworthy, Dorset. Club Shoot, 6 p.m.
Aug. 16: Bowland & District G.C., Sawley, near Clitheroe, Lancs. Open Shoot, D.T.L.
Aug. 16: Kimpton & District Trapshooting Club. Novice Cup.
Aug. 16: Worcestershire Sporting Championship, Redditch & District G.C., Brockhill Lane, Redditch.
Aug. 16-25: World Shooting Championships (including Clay Pigeon and Skeet), Moscow, Russia.
Aug. 17: Wormshill & Lynsted C.P.C. Club Skeet Championship.
Aug. 19: Bedford & District G.C., Elstow. Tyro Cup and Club Championship.

* * *

Reports and Results

The West Sussex Gun Club held the Sussex Skeet Championship at Goodwood on July 13 in a gale of wind which made the birds play some queer tricks and shooting difficult. At the conclusion of the meeting Mrs. C. E. Shrubb graciously presented prizes to the following:

High Gun: R. E. Dutton, 54 x 60.
Class A: 1, C. E. Shrubb, 52 x 60; 2, J. A. Baigent, 49 x 60; 3, J. Dutton, 48 x 60.
Class B: 1, D. Clay, 51 x 60; 2, A. Bartholomew, 44 x 60; 3, J. Adams, 40 x 60.
Class C: 1, G. Moss, 29 x 40; 2, R. Lunnen, 29 x 40; 3, R. Hague, 27 x 40.
I.C.I. Shield and Medal, R. E. Dutton, 37 x 40.
Novice Cup, A. Sargent, 19 x 40.

* * *

The Cumberland and Westmorland Clay Pigeon Championships were held on July 24 under perfect conditions and there was some excellent shooting. The winner of the Championship was J. S. Hope of Raughtonhead, who beat by three points V. B. Huthart of Dalston, the runner-up and 1957 champion. Mr. Hope has now won this Championship four times; his first was the North of England Championship a few years ago. Owing to the shield being still at the engravers, the presentation will be made at the Cumberland-Westmorland Sporting Championship on August 7 at the Moorhouse Hall, Wigton. Much regret was expressed when D. McNeil of Wigton did not enter for the Championship as he has been runner-up five times and twice third in the County Championships, but owing to refereeing and scoring duties he had very little time.

High Gun: T. Brockie of Hawick, the Scottish Champion.
Cumberland-Westmorland Championship: 1, J. S. Hope; 2, V. B. Huthart; 3, W. Wilson; 4, W. Robinson; 5, E. Dixon.
Cumberland-Westmorland Novice: T. Osborne.
The 5-Bird Event was won by the well-konwn sportsman and president of the Carlisle Gun Club, J. Pirt of Workington, with a possible.

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GUNDOG NEWS

Conducted by P. R. A. MOXON, Beoley Kennels, Redditch, Worcs.

A READER in India, who is an official of the Gundog League of that county, has written raising some interesting points in connection with spaniel field trials. ". . . in India, we usually follow the English field trial rules," he writes, "but I do not know how the following has crept into practice these days over here. In Open and Championship stakes, if two or more birds are shot, some judges, at times, say, "I want your dog to bring you *that* bird, mind you, not this, that or the other, and a dog is penalised for bringing the wrong bird. I would like to know your opinion upon this pin-pointing by judges, and how far the practice is followed in England, irrespective of the bird being a marked or an unmarked one?

"Secondly, in these stakes, if a dog is sent to retrieve a bird and whilst quartering his ground another bird or a hare is shot nearby and the dog goes out to the fall and picks it up should the dog be penalised? If it is checked by its handler and does not commit the crime would you not give full marks for control?"

From the above, it seems that even in India there has been a tendency of recent years to judge spaniels more upon retriever lines, as has been happening over here. This subject has already been discussed in these pages, when I reproduced the letter sent out to spaniel judges by the Kennel Club Field Trial Committee, which suggested that many judges placed too much emphasis upon retrieving in spaniels. There has been quite a lot of discontent among spaniel handlers in past seasons, over this very question. The spaniel is, first and foremost, a questing dog, which must find and flush game (be it fur or feather) before a shot can be obtained. Although it is admitted that retrieving is important, and a certain amount of "hand work" (ability to be directed) is desirable, some judges have placed *too much* emphasis upon this, often ignoring previous good work on the part of a dog in the matter of questing, facing cover and general ground treatment.

True Spaniel Work

True spaniel work, of the old order, was mainly on rabbits, and even if the dog did not get the opportunity to mark the rabbit as it turned over, at least it had a line to follow from the flushing point. Long, unmarked retrieves were seldom called for, and the question of making a dog retrieve a particular rabbit or bird, when several were shot, hardly ever arose. Since myxomatosis and the decline in the rabbit population, spaniel trial have had to be conducted on game, often in rather unsuitable country, and longer retrieves, many unmarked, have been called for. It is generally conceded that this change of game has been beneficial to spaniels, proving their adaptability and suitability to work as "utility" dogs, but it has also, unfortunately, tended to place emphasis upon wider ranging dogs and longer and more complicated retrieves.

The demand of the American spaniel fraternity is also partly responsible for the change. In the U.S.A. spaniel trials are nearly always conducted on "planted" pheasants, and American sportsmen require a hard-going, wide ranging dog, capable of undertaking long retrieves and working to hand signal on blind ones. Although nobody can afford to be behind the times, and must train to meet the present trend to a certain extent, it is felt by many spaniel men over here that things are—or were—getting out of hand. I say "were," for it is to be hoped that the Kennel Club's circular will effect a noticeable improvement in spaniel judging in the seasons to come.

Another factor to be considered is the increasing employment for spaniel trials of judges who are "retriever minded" and, in many cases, are retriever men pure and simple. There is a sad dearth of good judges for spaniels. Many of the men the societies would like to have as judges would prefer to run dogs rather than officiate, and the few who are willing to judge are inundated with requests to do so. Some new names are cropping up and every endeavour is being made to "train up" new judges.

Scene at a pre-myxomatosis trial at Barton Mills.

Unfortunately, however, some of these men have had little to do with spaniels prior to myxomatosis, and therefore do not completely understand the requirements of a good spaniel. The danger that our spaniels will become "questing retrievers" is very real if this situation continues, and it is all wrong that a really good quester, which not only treats its ground methodically and with pace and style, but which faces punishing cover unflinchingly, should be marked down because of its inability to be handled on to a certain bird (which it has not had the chance to mark) as well as a less worthy (from the questing point of view) competitor

A Close-Ranging Dog

The man who shoots over a spaniel—the average rough shooter—requires a close-ranging dog which treats its ground methodically and will face all types of cover. Its retrieves will not normally be of a very complicated type, seldom unmarked, and the question of "this bird not that" does not arise. If the emphasis is going to be placed upon wide-ranging, ability to be "handled on to a six-pence" and unmarked retrieves at great distances, the spaniel is going to lose much of its natural close hunting and gamefinding ability, and ite appeal, as far as the rough shooter is concerned, will wane

It was difficult enough under former circumstances to train up a good, reliable, steady and persevering spaniel with pace and style and good ground sense. If we are to concentrate too much upon handling on long distance and unmarked retrieves, we are obviously going to lose something. The man who requires a dog which will get out into the country and be directed by hand off this bird on to that can and should employ a retriever, whose sole mission in life is the finding of dead and wounded game and has been trained to an advanced stage of handling at a distance.

My correspondent's second point—about the dog which goes to pick up a bird or hare shot whilst it is out searching for another bird—is fairly easily answered. In my opinion, the dog should not go in to the fall of any bird shot whilst it is out retrieving, but that if it stops to the shot, marks the fall, and when ordered by its handler to proceed with the original search starts towards the last fall and can be checked by the handler, it is a sound spaniel and should not be penalised. If a reasonably experienced dog it should be capable of being got on to the original bird and if it is, then it is a job well done. If the dog runs into the fall of the second bird whilst out retrieving then it is not under good command and should certainly pay the penalty.

This question of shooting whilst a dog is out retrieving is a very vexed one, at both spaniel and retriever trials. The usual arrangement is that only in an open stake is the shooting of a bird whilst a dog is retrieving permissible, and the judges make this clear to beforehand. Sometimes, even in a open stake, the judges ask the guns not to shoot anything near a dog which is retrieving, but allow birds at the far end of the line to be shot. It seems to me grossly unfair to shoot a bird to fall close to a dog out retrieving, more especially so to a spaniel which actually flushes the bird on its way out or in.

In theory, the well trained spaniel or retriever will ignore the fresh bird, but frequently it does not and the incident may lead to all sorts of complications, often ending in complete chaos and sometimes with both birds ungathered. True, it may help the judges in one way or another, either by discovering some very steady or unsteady dogs, but it is more likely to completely "upset the book." Once the line has been halted and a dog sent out to retrieve, nothing should be shot—certainly nothing put up by the dog. If, as sometimes happens, a bird gets up some distance from the working dog and flies back over the waiting line, it can be shot *behind* the line without too much danger of a debacle, but I think this should be the only type of shot allowed when a dog is out.

It seems to me that in recent years the tendency of many judges has been to do all

in their power to fault dogs, rather than to seek for their better points, and certainly it makes judging much easier if several dogs commit crimes of unsteadiness and the like, thus whittling down the card to a mere handful of dogs. However, this is not judging, but taking the easy way out. Something—especially in puppy stakes—the dogs do judge themselves very thoroughly, but in open stakes where the level of competition is so even, judges sometimes get quite frantic towards the end of the day, and seize upon every possible excuse to "out" a dog. This sometimes leads to very bitter feeling and many handlers have felt "hard done by" when it has appeared the judge is doing all he can to fault a dog.

Judging is at the best of times, a thankless task. You make more enemies than friends—indeed, the only man who really likes you by the end of the day is the one who wins first prize! However, I believe that a lot of quite unnecessary bitterness has been aroused by making trials too difficult and subjecting the dogs to undue temptation. If the judges know their job and the proper work of the dogs they are judging, they should usually be quite capable of forming a just opinion of the merits of each competitor without resorting to methods which will justifiably irk the handlers.

Spaniel trials, in particular, can be judged to a large extent upon the dogs' method of ground treatment, their attitude towards cover (and perhaps water and reeds), their pace, style and general behaviour. Excessively complicated retrieves should not be necessary. If a judge is observant, and makes good use of his judging book, jotting down the salient features of each dog's work, method, style and courage, by the afternoon he should have a fair idea of the top three or four.

In the run-off, if one be needed and it is often more satisfactory for all concerned if one is held—judges can be a little harder and more exacting, especially in open stakes. Even here, however, I think it is dangerous and unfair to go out of the way to make things too difficult. I am no believer in giving equal prizes and I feel that there must always be "a little something" which can separate two dogs. These views are my own personal ones, resulting from my experiences handling, judging and reporting at trials. It would be interesting to have the views and experiences of other handlers and judges, and whilst fully expecting to be torn apart, I feel sure that we could all learn something if some of our more experienced judges will write in.

ROUND OUR WAY—XVIII

by Walter McIntire

THERE are some people round our way who think Alf Park is as thick as two short planks And they may be right at that. Mind you, nobody has told Alf what they are thinking for Alf is a bit touchy besides being very big.

It really started at a Committee meeting when someone suggested the Club should hold a "Ladies Night." Some fellows seemed to think that wives and girl friends would be more willing to let a fellow go off wildfowling at week-ends and even during the week if they could see what the Club was doing and generally see what other wildfowlers are like; particularly if they were to find these other wildfowlers more or less human. This idea was discussed at length and it was very interesting to hear some of the chaps who have got themselves married or engaged giving away the fact that life isn't all milk and honey, for this is a view I've always held and is the reason why I don't have any dealings with anybody I might think of getting myself married to. In fact this opinion is shared by a few of us round our way and Alf Park who was sitting by me said, "Women and wildfowling wont mix," in a very loud voice and it more or less killed the idea of a Ladies Night.

Then somebody else said that if the Club ran a Dance it would appeal to more outsiders and that the Naturalists might come along as well and anyway it would help to boost Club funds. To me this just seemed the same old story told in another way but I voted for it as I am all for making money for the Club by any means so long as they are legal.

When the Committee finally decided on a Dance Alf and I agreed to run the raffle which would keep us pleasantly occupied for a time and the rest of the time we could spend in the bar.

A lot of members from town bought dance tickets and so did the Naturalists Society which was very appreciative of the chance to come along. I heard that one or two of their ladies wondered if they'd have to cope with partners in waders but generally it looked like being a great success and even Findlay Bott, our treasurer, was smiling.

It was a "lounge suits" affair for most of our chaps said that while they didn't mind giving up an evening to walk round a dance floor, they didn't fancy imitating Liberace to do it. Come to think of it though, there aren't so many round our way who'd look like him even if they dressed the part.

Decorated Scene

Alf and I were at the Victory Rooms early and I must admit that the place looked good though maybe I shouldn't say so. Six of us had spent the afternoon putting up streamers and balloons and setting tables out for the caterers and doing lots of odd jobs and everybody who came in said they wouldn't have recognized the place.

Alf and I did a good trade in raffle tickets and I got quite handy at persuading elderly ladies from the Naturalists Society—and quite a few young ones too—that our lads would offer them a fair price for the waders or cartridges if they were lucky enough to win them.

It was a change to see our chaps looking all clean and shaved and I think when Mr. Pellissey arrived he was pleasantly surprised for he had a very nice young lady with him and was looking a bit doubtful about things when I cornered him at the entrance and sold him some raffle tickets.

Alf put his foot in things early on. The Bishop had been nabbed by Mr. Pellissey just as the first dance started and so the girl who'd come with Pellissey was sitting all alone by the wall, waiting, when Alf spotted her. He made a bee-line across the floor, bumping into couples, just as though he'd gone into the tide to retrieve a goose. She saw him coming and smiled and got up, ready to dance, as Alf arrived. "Would you like," said Alf as she put her cloak down, "to buy a raffle ticket?"

She didn't seem to hear properly—she just stared at him and then said, "What?" in a strangled sort of voice. Alf said, "You might win a pair of waders," and all of a sudden she gave a surprised sort of gasp and stamped her foot. Mr. Pellissey had arrived by then looking a bit puzzled and one or two people weren't dancing as they should but were just jigging about listening. Alf had gone very red and blurted out, "It's only what I've said to the others," as Pellissey whisked her away.

Now I've known Alf a long time and although Mr. Pellissey got the full story later from his daughter that was no reason for him to think Alf had insulted her for Alf's not that kind at all. But Alf should have had the sense to stay in the bar with me afterwards. Instead, he went off to put things straight and although I admit she's a very atractive girl indeed, I can't help thinking that any wildfowler who sits out two dances discussing migration with a birdwatcher's daughter is heading for trouble.

The Clay School

by Taproot

AS a young man I nursed a quixotic inhibition against using the "gun-up" position for "down-the-line" clay pigeons. I believed the man of sporting instincts should keep his gun below the elbow, making no move before the bird appeared. After all, he knew when and where the rise would take place and he had a firm stance to work from—all of which was easier than conditions in the field. If therefore he missed—as I almost invariably did miss—at least he missed like a gentleman.

For anybody keen to improve his shooting there was a certain amount of sense in this attitude. The first thing the good shot teaches himself is to mount his gun quickly and cleanly. Cuddling it like a baby before calling "Pull" is not likely to foster dexterity. Meanwhile I consoled myself with the notion that the "gun-up" experts for all their possibles and records runs would be completely pixilated in a snipe-bog or a root-field.

These old arguments were revived for me recently by a young friend's invitation to spend a Sunday morning at his clay pigeon club. The site itself was a delightful one with the traps situated at the head of a combe looking out across cornfields just coming into ear. The atmosphere too was friendly and informal and at first I felt very little worried about my own possible performance. After ten minutes watching I began to feel a trifle more concerned, suspecting that, in the interests of cosmic gaiety, I had been given an altogether spurious build-up. The members were to be discomforted by the visiting tiger and the latter by his self-revelation as an indubitable rabbit. Also I did not much like the look of the birds themselves. A double-rise event was in progress and the pairs skidded away into a cross wind while the left hand bird usually went into a sharp decline like a Victorian heroine. I doubted if I should touch a feather.

In this mild crisis I decided to throw prejudice overboard and try the despised "gun-up" position. When my turn came I took aim almost furtively at a point above the trap, glad that father was not present at this ignoble exhibition. Then I called "Pull." There was a brisk *rat-rat* and both birds flew to fragments. Whereupon the builder-upper, who was helping with the trap, put his head round the galvanised sheets and exclaimed in a disappointed tone: "I say, old boy, was that really *you*."

Although I failed to break all the subsequent birds there was no doubt that the new method paid off, and I have been wondering since whether any moral might be drawn from my experience. There are many occasions in shooting that demand the skill to mount the gun cleanly and fire the moment it touches the shoulder. More often there is time to spare. It may be that many of us, bedevilled by the fear of poking, are inclined to be over hasty. In the field we telescope the mounting of the gun and the covering of the bird into one movement. I suggest that it might be valuable to separate them *mentally*, for, in fast or slow time, the gunstock must be accurately bedded in the shoulder before a kill can result.

Wildfowling Clubs

The Wildfowlers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland: Hon. Secretary, Lt.-Commdr. J. W. Anderton, 19 Castle Street, Liverpool, 2.

HON. SECRETARY'S NOTES

The hon. secretary will be away from August 2 to August 18, and the hon. treasurer from July 25 to August 11.

CLUB REPORTS

The North Lincs. Wildfowlers' Club. There was a new "Independence Day" created in North Lincolnshire, but, in this case, two days later than the anniversary of our American cousins. The first Sunday in July saw the Club president, Dr. J. Burn, with officials and some committee members, early astir. This day saw the culmination of our dreams and the efforts of our duck-rearing sub-committee.

Promptly at 6.0 a.m. the party met at Mr. Morris's pens, and, catching and crating soon accomplished, a move was made to the preserve of Mr. Rawlins. After culling the duck to be retained, the rest were ringed and crated. At this stage we were joined by Mr. A. W. Haughton who had very kindly agreed to take a cine camera record of the actual duck releases.

In the meantime, the crated results of Mr. Brian Skelton's activities had been added to the convoy, and a start was made for the first release point. It was an ideal spot. A deep, wide drain with steep banks and a winding course, together with sufficient reeds to hide a thousand birds. One bird decided to establish his leadership by giving an excellent flying display before taking to the water.

The column moved about ten miles to the second release point, and, as the birds released here were not quite so strong on the wing, was specially chosen so that there was plenty of water with dense reed screening; an admirable place for skulking duck.

After the second pictorial record was obtained, the journey to the final release point was made. This was in the flat marshlands, where despite the attentions of lots of inquisitive stock, the third release was carried out. Within a very few minutes these birds had found something to their liking and were vigorously dibbling. Following a round of motion-picture taking, and quite a few "stills," everyone left the lush but soggy pastures for firmer ground, four hours after assembling, but with a feeling of great content.

The members of the sub-committee who reared the birds, Messrs. J. A. Norris, H. Rawlins, and B. Skelton, are to be congratulated on a job well done, in spite of very bad weather conditions. All birds released carried the W.A.G.B.I. leg-rings, and it is hoped that all shooting men, whether members of a Club or not, will report any duck shot during the coming season, which, it is emphasised, does not commence until September 1.

Golden Jubilee Number

A special Golden Jubilee Number, to celebrate W.A.G.B.I.'s fiftieth year, will be published on August 29. While it includes many of the usual features of the weekly issue, and also a page of reports on partridge prospects, it is mainly concerned with the past, present and future of W.A.G.B.I. and wildfowling in general. It will be a 44-page paper, with a golden cover and the W.A.G.B.I. badge in place of the usual photograph.

If you want to be sure of obtaining a copy of this Number, or additional copies, you are advised to place an order with your newsagent without delay; or copies may be obtained from this office for 1/3 (post free 1/6).

The 4th annual clay pigeon shoot of the Hull and East Riding Wildfowlers' Association was held on June 29 on the Club's ground at Thearne. The unusually fine day no doubt accounted for a number of members not attending; presumably their families insisted on a day at the seaside. However, a good number were present and 33 took part in the shoot. For the first time at the annual shoot, possibles were scored, these were by Messrs. A. Leek (hon. treasurer) and J. W. Coupland (assistant secretary). On the shoot-off the cup was won by Mr. J. W. Coupland.

Mr. F. Mason (vice president) presented the cup and prizes, and remarked how the standard of shooting had improved year by year, particularly since the club have had their own lay out, with the facility it gave members for practice at reasonable cost. Mr. Mason also expressed a vote of thanks to the members who had put in so much time and work on the lay out, also to the members who had generously donated prizes for the event. Prizes were qualified for by handicap, and won by Messrs. H. Millington, A. Leek, G. Hemshall, F. Coupland, J. Bradley, J. Hargreaves, J. Pelham, C. Machen, E. Hurd, F. Mason, J. Pickering, S. Gossip and F. Morgan. Mr. J. Pickering, who has held the cup for the last year, was presented with the usual engraved replica. A photograph of the event appears in Letters to the Editor page.

* * *

An informal meeting was held on May 28 at the County Hotel, Chelmsford, between representatives from the Essex Bird-Watching and Preservation Society, and the Essex Federation of Wildfowlers' Associations.

This meeting was held to ascertain whether there was any common ground which could be exploited to the mutual interest of both bird-watchers and wildfowlers. No agenda was arranged and the evening was spent in general discussion on various matters affecting wild bird life, e.g. destruction of eggs by vermin, and the effect of the marked increase in the mute swan population.

It was unanimously agreed that a joint liaison committee should be formed periodically to meet, exchange views, and discuss further such matters. The committee will consist of a maximum of six representatives from each side and will meet in Chelmsford.

A meeting, therefore, of the Essex Federation of W.A.'s was held on June 28 at the Plough Hotel, Chelmsford. Representatives from the Home Counties, Leigh-on-Sea, and Little Oakley W.A. attended and the chair was taken by Mr. Townsend of the Leigh Club. Mr. John Gow, the hon. solicitor of W.A.G.B.I., was present as a guest to observe the proceedings.

The hon. secretary gave a report on the meeting with the Essex Bird-Watching Society, and details of the liaison committee which will be formed with them.

On rearing schemes it was anticipated that approximately 250 mallard would be released by member clubs. The largest number being reared by the Little Oakley Club. It was decided that an article covering the Federation's activities should be written and published in the leading Essex Press.

Several points from the W.A.G.B.I. A.G.M. were brought to the attention of the Federation. These included the necessity for co-operating in the viscera scheme, and in recording details of wildfowl movements for future reference. It was further mentioned that associations should publicise their activities in *The Shooting Times*.

Other subjects of mutual concern were discussed during the evening. Finally the next meeting was fixed for Saturday, November 1, at the same venue.

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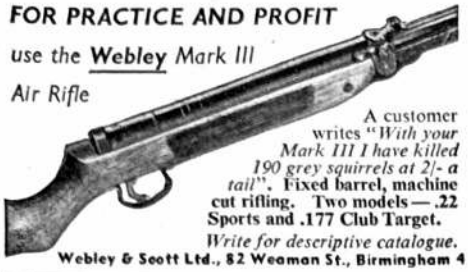

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SINGLE PUNT and double 4-bore, as featured in "The Gun Punt Adventure," £75; no offers.—Willock, Walton 5959.

12-BORE HERCULES RUSTLESS CARTRIDGES: Sinoxid priming; corrugated waterproof tube; Cooppal Excelsior powder; choice of five colours of case; supplied packed in cartons of 250 (minimum), price £7/10/0 carriage paid; discount on larger quantities. Send for list. — The Hercules Armament Co. Ltd., 8 St. Martin's Street, Leicester Square, W.C.2.

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EXCHANGE watch, fishing suit. Wanted, perfect s.b. 3in. .410 gun. Box A3755.

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FOR SALE two yellow bitches, first class workers, good pedigree, on approval. Can take Labradors or Springers to train.—Gillan, Head Keeper, Balmoral, Ballater.

FIELD TRIAL bred Labrador puppies for sale, born May 29, by Hiwood Glenuie Blackrock out of Jane of Lowesby, dam of Jupiter of Lowesby, winner of Challenge Certificate.—Price and particulars, Duchess of Marlborough, Blenheim Palace. Telephone: Woodstock 432.

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GERMAN SHORT-HAIRED Pointer puppies, excellent pedigree, gun-trained parents, born mid-May.—Ault, Nettleden Lodge, Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead, Herts.

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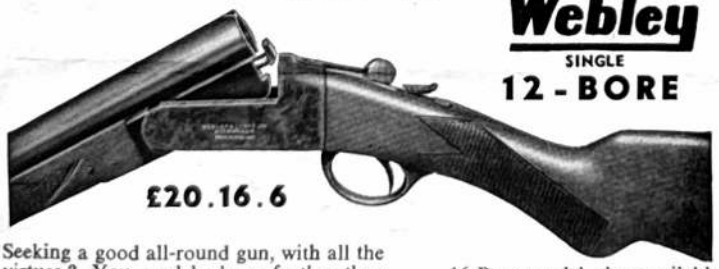

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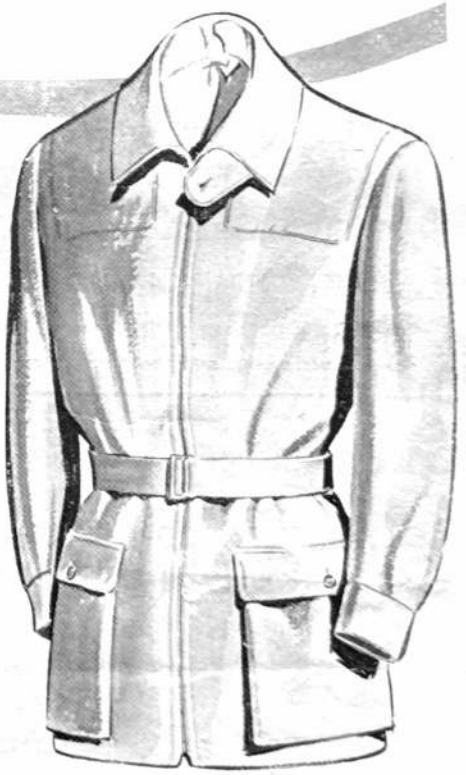

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